

SPORTING VERSE
By ADAM LINDSAY GORDON
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HERE'S A HEALTH TO EVERY SPORTSMAN, BE HE STABLEMAN OR LORD.

(*'A HUNTING SONG.'*)

(*Frontispiece.*)

SPORTING VERSE

BY

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

ILLUSTRATED IN COLOUR BY

LIONEL EDWARDS

LONDON

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
A HUNTING SONG	1
THE LAST LEAP	3
HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE	5
FROM THE WRECK	10
GONE	15
HIPPODROMANIA : OR, WHIFFS FROM THE PIPE	18
PART I. VISIONS IN THE SMOKE	18
PART II. THE FIELDS OF COLERAINE	24
PART III. CREDAT JUDAEUS APELLA	26
PART IV. BANKER'S DREAM	29
PART V. EX FUMO DARE LUCEM	33
THE SICK STOCKRIDER	43
THE ROMANCE OF BRITOMARTE	47
WOLF AND HOUND	60
YE WEARIE WAYFARER	64
FYTTE I. BY WOOD AND WOLD	64
FYTTE II. BY FLOOD AND FIELD	65
FYTTE III. ZU DER EDLEN JAGD	68
FYTTE IV. IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS	70
FYTTE V. LEX TALIONIS	75
FYTTE VI. POTTERS' CLAY	78
FYTTE VII. CITO PEDE PRETERIT AETAS	79
FYTTE VIII. FINIS EXOPTATUS	84
THE ROLL OF THE KETTLEDROM : OR, THE LAY OF THE LAST CHARGER	92
A DEDICATION	101

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Here's a health to every sportsman, be he
stableman or lord. *Frontispiece*

A HUNTING SONG.

He calls 'hunted fairly' a horse that has barely
Been stripp'd for a trot within sight of the hounds. *face p. 8*

HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE.

They came with the rush of the southern surf
On the bar of the storm-girt bay. *face p. 20*

VISIONS IN THE SMOKE.

Of chases and courses dogs dream, so do horses—
Last night I was dozing and dreaming. *face p. 30*

BANKER'S DREAM.

With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run
of hoofs. *face p. 46*

THE SICK STOCKRIDER.

I remember the lowering wintry morn,
And the mist on the Cotswold Hills. *face p. 64*

BY FLOOD AND FIELD.

No game was ever yet worth a rap
For a rational man to play,
Into which no accident, no mishap,
Could possibly find its way. *face p. 74*

IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS.

To the slopes where couch, in their antler'd pride,
The deer on the perfum'd heather. *face p. 84*

CITO PEDE PRETERIT AETAS.

SPORTING VERSE

A HUNTING SONG

HERE 's a health to every sportsman, be he stableman or
lord,
If his heart be true, I care not what his pocket may
afford ;
And may he ever pleasantly each gallant sport pursue
If he takes his liquor fairly, and his fences fairly too.

He cares not for the bubbles of fortune's fickle tide,
Who like Bendigo can battle, and like Olliver can ride.
He laughs at those who caution, at those who chide he 'll
frown,
As he clears a five-foot paling, or he knocks a peeler
down.

The dull cold world may blame us, boys ! but what care
we the while,
If coral lips will cheer us, and bright eyes on us smile ?
For beauty's fond caresses can most tenderly repay
The weariness and trouble of many an anxious day.

Then fill your glass, and drain it, too, with all your heart
and soul,
To the best of sports—the Fox-Hunt, the Fair Ones, and
the Bowl ;
To a stout heart in adversity through every ill to steer,
And when fortune smiles a score of friends like those around
us here.

THE LAST LEAP

ALL is over ! fleet career,
Dash of greyhound slipping thongs,
Flight of falcon, bound of deer,
Mad hoof-thunder in our rear,
Cold air rushing up our lungs,
Din of many tongues.

Once again, one struggle good,
One vain effort ; he must dwell
Near the shifted post, that stood
Where the splinters of the wood,
Lying in the torn tracks, tell
How he struck and fell.

Crest where cold drops beaded cling,
Small ear drooping, nostril full
Glazing to a scarlet ring,
Flanks and haunches quivering,
Sinews stiff'ning, void and null,
Dumb eyes sorrowful.

Satin coat that seems to shine
Duller now, black braided tress
That a softer hand than mine
Far away was wont to twine,

THE LAST LEAP

That in meadows far from this
Softer lips might kiss.

All is over ! this is death,
And I stand to watch thee die,
Brave old horse ! with 'bated breath
Hardly drawn through tight-clenched teeth,
Lips indented deep, but eye
Only dull and dry.

Musing on the husk and chaff
Gather'd where life's tares are sown,
Thus I speak, and force a laugh
That is half a sneer and half
An involuntary groan,
In a stifled tone—

' Rest, old friend ! thy day, though rife
With its toil, hath ended soon ;
We have had our share of strife,
Tumblers in the mask of life,
In the pantomime of noon
Clown and pantaloon.

' With a flash that ends thy pain,
Respite and oblivion blest
Come to greet thee. I in vain
Fall ; I rise to fall again :
Thou hast fallen to thy rest—
And thy fall is best ! '

HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE

A LAY OF THE LOAMSHIRE HUNT CUP

' Aye, squire,' said Stevens, ' they back him at evens ;
The race is all over, bar shouting, they say ;
The Clown ought to beat her ; Dick Neville is sweeter
Than ever—he swears he can win all the way.

' A gentleman rider—well, I 'm an outsider,
But if he 's a gent who the mischief 's a jock ?
You swells mostly blunder, Dick rides for the plunder,
He rides, too, like thunder—he sits like a rock.

' He calls " hunted fairly " a horse that has barely
Been stripp'd for a trot within sight of the hounds,
A horse that at Warwick beat Birdlime and Yorick,
And gave Abdelkader at Aintree nine pounds.

' They say we have no test to warrant a protest ;
Dick rides for a lord and stands in with a steward ;
The light of their faces they show him—his case is
Prejudged and his verdict already secured.

' But none can outlast her, and few travel faster,
She strides in her work clean away from The Drag,
You hold her and sit her she couldn't be fitter,
Whenever you hit her she 'll spring like a stag.

' And p'rhaps the green jacket, at odds though they back it,
May fall, or there 's no knowing what may turn up.
The mare is quite ready, sit still and ride steady,
Keep cool ; and I think you may just win the Cup.'

Dark-brown with tan muzzle, just stripp'd for the tussle,
Stood Iseult, arching her neck to the curb,
A lean head and fiery, strong quarters and wiry,
A loin rather light but a shoulder superb.

Some parting injunction, bestow'd with great unction,
I tried to recall, but forgot like a dunce,
When Reginald Murray, full tilt on White Surrey,
Came down in a hurry to start us at once.

' Keep back in the yellow ! Come up on Othello !
Hold hard on the chestnut ! Turn round on The Drag !
Keep back there on Spartan ! Back you, sir, in tartan !
So, steady there, easy,' and down went the flag.

We started, and Kerr made strong running on Mermaid,
Through furrows that led to the first stake-and-bound,
The crack half extended look'd bloodlike and splendid,
Held wide on the right where the headland was sound.

I pulled hard to baffle her rush with the snaffle,
Before her two-thirds of the field got away,
All through the wet pasture where floods of the last year
Still loitered, they clotted my crimson with clay.

The fourth fence, a wattle, floor'd Monk and Blue-bottle ;
The Drag came to grief at the blackthorn and ditch,
The rails toppled over Redoubt and Red Rover,
The lane stopped Lycurgus and Leicestershire Witch.

She passed like an arrow Kildare and Cock Sparrow,
And Mantrap and Mermaid refused the stone wall ;
And Giles on The Greyling came down on the paling,
And I was left sailing in front of them all.

I took them a burster, nor eased her nor nursed her
Until the Black Bullfinch led into the plough,
And through the strong bramble we bored with a scramble—
My cap was knock'd off by the hazel-tree bough.

Where furrows looked lighter I drew the rein tighter—
Her dark chest all dappled with flakes of white foam,
Her flanks mud bespattered, a weak rail she shattered—
We landed on turf with our heads turn'd for home.

Then crash'd a low binder, and then close behind her
The sward to the strokes of the favourite shook,
His rush roused her mettle, yet ever so little
She shorten'd her stride as we raced at the brook.

She rose when I hit her. I saw the stream glitter,
A wide scarlet nostril flashed close to my knee,
Between sky and water The Clown came and caught her,
The space that he cleared was a caution to see.

And forcing the running, discarding all cunning,
A length to the front went the rider in green ;
A long strip of stubble, and then the big double,
Two stiff flights of rails with a quickset between.

She raced at the rasper, I felt my knees grasp her,
I found my hands give to her strain on the bit,
She rose when The Clown did—our silks as we bounded
Brush'd lightly, our stirrups clash'd loud as we lit.

A rise steeply sloping, a fence with stone coping—
The last, we diverged round the base of the hill ;
His path was the nearer, his leap was the clearer,
I flogg'd up the straight and he led sitting still.

She came to his quarter and on still I brought her,
And, up to his girth, to his breast-plate she drew,
A short prayer from Neville just reach'd me, ' The Devil,'
He mutter'd—lock'd level the hurdles we flew.

A hum of hoarse cheering, a dense crowd careering,
All sights seen obscurely, all shouts vaguely heard ;
' The green wins ! ' ' The crimson ! ' The multitude
swims on,

And figures are blended and features are blurr'd.

' The horse is her master ! ' ' The green forges past her ! '
' The Clown will outlast her ! ' ' The Clown wins ! '
' The Clown ! '

The white railing races with all the white faces,
The chestnut outpaces, outstretches the brown.



HE CALLS HUNTED FAIRLY, A HORSE THAT HAS BARELY
BEEN STRIPP'D FOR A TROT, WITHIN SIGHT OF THE HOUNDS.

SHOW WE BEAT THE FAVORITE.

(Faces page 8.)

On still past the gateway she strains in the straightway,
Still struggles 'The Clown by a short neck at most,'
He swerves, the green scourges, the stand rocks and surges,
And flashes, and verges, and flits the white post.

Aye ! so ends the tussle—I knew the tan muzzle
Was first, though the ring-men were yelling 'Dead heat !'
A nose I could swear by, but Clarke said 'The mare by
A short head.' And that 's how the favourite was beat.

FROM THE WRECK

‘ Turn out, boys ’—‘ What ’s up with our super to-night ?

The man ’s mad—Two hours to daybreak I ’d swear—
Stark mad—why, there isn’t a glimmer of light.’

‘ Take Bolingbroke, Alec, give Jack the young mare ;
Look sharp. A large vessel lies jamm’d on the reef,

And many on board still, and some wash’d on shore.
Ride straight with the news—they may send some relief

From the township ; and we—we can do little more.
You, Alec, you know the near cuts ; you can cross

The “ Sugarloaf ” ford with a scramble, I think ;

Don’t spare the blood filly, nor yet the black horse ;

Should the wind rise, God help them ! the ship will
soon sink.

Old Peter ’s away down the paddock, to drive

The nags to the stockyard as fast as he can—

A life and death matter ; so, lads, look alive,’

Half-dress’d, in the dark to the stockyard we ran.

There was bridling with hurry, and saddling with haste,

Confusion and cursing for lack of a moon ;

‘ Be quick with these buckles, we ’ve no time to waste ’ ;

‘ Mind the mare, she can use her hind legs to some
tune.’

' Make sure of the crossing-place ; strike the old track,
They 've fenced off the new one ; look out for the holes
On the wombat hills.' ' Down with the slip rails ; stand
back.'
' And ride, boys, the pair of you, ride for your souls.'

In the low branches heavily laden with dew,
In the long grasses spoiling with deadwood that day,
Where the blackwood, the box, and the bastard oak grew,
Between the tall gum-trees we gallop'd away—
We crash'd through a brush fence, we splash'd through a
swamp—
We steer'd for the north near ' The Eaglehawk's Nest '—
We bore to the left, just beyond ' The Red Camp,'
And round the black tea-tree belt wheel'd to the
west—

We cross'd a low range sickly scented with musk
From wattle-tree blossom—we skirted a marsh—
Then the dawn faintly dappled with orange the dusk,
And peal'd overhead the jay's laughter note harsh,
And shot the first sunstreak behind us, and soon
The dim dewy uplands were dreamy with light ;
And full on our left flash'd ' the reedy lagoon,'
And sharply ' The Sugarloaf ' rear'd on our right.
A smother'd curse broke through the bushman's brown
beard,
He turn'd in his saddle, his brick-colour'd cheek
Flush'd feebly with sundawn, said, ' Just what I fear'd ;
Last fortnight's late rainfall has flooded the creek.'

Black Bolingbroke snorted, and stood on the brink
One instant, then deep in the dark, sluggish swirl
Plunged headlong. I saw the horse suddenly sink,
Till round the man's armpits the wave seem'd to curl.
We follow'd—one cold shock, and deeper we sank
Than they did, and twice tried the landing in vain ;
The third struggle won it, straight up the steep bank
We stagger'd, then out on the skirts of the plain.

The stockrider, Alec, at starting had got
The lead, and had kept it throughout ; 'twas his boast
That through thickest of scrub he could steer like a shot,
And the black horse was counted the best on the coast.
The mare had been awkward enough in the dark,
She was eager and headstrong, and barely half broke ;
She had had me too close to a big stringy-bark,
And had made a near thing of a crooked she-oak ;
But now on the open, lit up by the morn,
She flung the white foam-flakes from nostril to neck,
And chased him—I hatless, with shirt-sleeves all torn
(For he may ride ragged who rides from a wreck)—
And faster and faster across the wide heath
We rode till we raced. Then I gave her her head,
And she—stretching out with the bit in her teeth—
She caught him, outpaced him, and passed him, and led.

We neared the new fence ; we were wide of the track ;
I look'd right and left—she had never been tried
At a stiff leap. 'Twas little he cared on the black.
' You 're more than a mile from the gateway,' he cried.

I hung to her head, touched her flank with the spurs
 (In the red streak of rail not the ghost of a gap) ;
She shortened her long stroke, she pricked her sharp ears,
 She flung it behind her with hardly a rap—
I saw the post quiver where Bolingbroke struck,
 And guessed that the pace we had come the last mile
Had blown him a bit (he could jump like a buck).
 We galloped more steadily then for a while.

The heath was soon pass'd, in the dim distance lay
 The mountain. The sun was just clearing the tips
Of the ranges to eastward. The mare—could she stay ?
 She was bred very nearly as clean as Eclipse ;
She led, and as oft as he came to her side,
 She took the bit free and untiring as yet ;
Her neck was arched double, her nostrils were wide,
 And the tips of her tapering ears nearly met—
' You 're lighter than I am,' said Alec at last,
 ' The horse is dead beat and the mare isn't blown.
She must be a good one—ride on and ride fast,
 You know your way now.' So I rode on alone.

Still galloping forward we pass'd the two flocks
 At M'Intyre's hut and M'Allister's hill—
She was galloping strong at the Warrigal Rocks—
 On the Wallaby Range she was galloping still—
And over the wasteland and under the wood,
 By down and by dale, and fell and by flat,
She gallop'd, and here in the stirrups I stood
 To ease her, and there in the saddle I sat

To steer her. We suddenly struck the red loam
Of the track near the troughs—then she reeled on the rise—
From her crest to her croup covered over with foam,
And blood-red her nostrils and bloodshot her eyes,
A dip in the dell where the wattle fire bloomed—
A bend round a bank that had shut out the view—
Large framed in the mild light the mountain had loom'd,
With a tall, purple peak bursting out from the blue.

I pull'd her together, I press'd her, and she
Shot down the decline to the Company's yard,
And on by the paddocks, yet under my knee
I could feel her heart thumping the saddle-flaps hard.
Yet a mile and another, and now we were near
The goal, and the fields and the farms flitted past ;
And 'twixt the two fences I turn'd with a cheer,
For a green, grass-fed mare 'twas a far thing and fast ;
And labourers, roused by her galloping hoofs,
Saw bare-headed rider and foam-sheeted steed ;
And shone the white walls and the slate-coloured roofs
Of the township. I steadied her then—I had need—
Where stood the old chapel (where stands the new church—
Since chapels to churches have changed in that town).
A short, sidelong stagger, a long forward lurch,
A slight choking sob, and the mare had gone down.
I slipp'd off the bridle, I slackened the girth,
I ran on and left her and told them my news ;
I saw her soon afterwards. What was she worth ?
How much for her hide ? She had never worn shoes.

GONE

IN Collins Street standeth a statue tall—
A statue tall on a pillar of stone,
Telling its story to great and small,
Of the dust reclaimed from the sand-waste lone ;
Weary and wasted, and worn and wan,
Feeble and faint, and languid and low,
He lay on the desert a dying man,
Who has gone, my friends, where we all must go.

There are perils by land, and perils by water,
Short, I ween, are the obsequies
Of the landsman lost, but they may be shorter
With the mariner lost in the trackless seas ;
And well for him, when the timbers start,
And the stout ship reels and settles below,
Who goes to his doom with as bold a heart
As that dead man gone where we all must go.

Man is stubborn his rights to yield,
And redder than dews at eventide
Are the dews of battle, shed on the field
By a nation's wrath or a despot's pride ;

But few who have heard their death-knell roll
From the cannon's lips where they faced the foe,
Have fallen as stout and steady of soul
As that dead man gone where we all must go

Traverse yon spacious burial-ground,
Many are sleeping soundly there,
Who pass'd with mourners standing around,
Kindred, and friends, and children fair ;
Did he envy such ending ? 'twere hard to say :
Had he cause to envy such ending ? no ;
Can the spirit feel for the senseless clay
When it once has gone where we all must go ?

What matters the sand or the whitening chalk,
The blighted herbage, the black'ning log,
The crooked beak of the eagle-hawk,
Or the hot, red tongue of the native dog ?
That cough was rugged, those sextons rude,
Yet, in spite of a leaden shroud, we know
That the bravest and fairest are earth-worms' food
When once they 've gone where we all must go.

With the pistol clenched in his failing hand,
With the death mist spread o'er his fading eyes,
He saw the sun go down on the sand,
And he slept, and never saw it rise ;

"Twas well ; he toil'd till his task was done,
Constant and calm in his latest throe,
The storm was weathered, the battle was won,
When he went, my friends, where we all must go.

God grant that whenever, soon or late,
Our course is run and our goal is reach'd,
We may meet our fate as steady and straight
As he whose bones in yon desert bleach'd ;
No tears are needed—our cheeks are dry,
We have none to waste upon living woe ;
Shall we sigh for one who has ceased to sigh,
Having gone, my friends, where we all must go ?

We tarry yet, we are toiling still,
He is gone and he fares the best,
He fought against odds, he struggled uphill,
He has fairly earned his season of rest ;
No tears are needed—fill out the wine,
Let the goblets clash, and the grape juice flow ;
Ho ! pledge me a death-drink, comrade mine,
To a brave man gone where we all must go.

HIPPODROMANIA: OR, WHIFFS FROM THE PIPE

In Five Parts

PART I

VISIONS IN THE SMOKE

REST, and be thankful! On the verge
Of the tall cliff, rugged and grey,
By whose granite base the breakers surge,
And shiver their frothy spray,
Outstretched, I gaze on the eddying wreath
That gathers and flits away,
With the surf beneath, and between my teeth
The stem of the 'ancient clay.'

With the anodyne cloud on my listless eyes,
With its spell on my dreamy brain,
As I watch the circling vapours rise
From the brown bowl up to the sullen skies,
My vision becomes more plain,
Till a dim kaleidoscope succeeds
Through the smoke-rack drifting and veering,
Like ghostly riders on phantom steeds
To a shadowy goal careering.

In their own generation the wise may sneer,
They hold our sports in derision ;
Perchance to sophist, or sage, or seer
Were allotted a graver vision.
Yet if man, of all the Creator plann'd,
His noblest work is reckoned,
Of the works of His hand, by sea or by land,
The horse may at least rank second.

Did they quail, those steeds of the squadrons light,
Did they flinch from the battle's roar,
When they burst on the guns of the Muscovite,
By the echoing Black Sea shore ?
On ! on ! to the cannons' mouth they stride,
With never a swerve nor a shy,
Oh ! the minutes of yonder maddening ride,
Long years of pleasure outvie !

No slave, but a comrade staunch, in this,
Is the horse, for he takes his share,
Not in peril alone, but in feverish bliss,
And in longing to do and dare.
Where bullets whistle, and round shot whiz,
Hoofs trample, and blades flash bare,
God send me an ending as fair as his
Who died in his stirrups there !

The wind has slumbered throughout the day,
Now a fitful gust springs over the bay,

My wandering thoughts no longer stray,
I 'll fix my overcoat buttons ;
Secure my old hat as best I may
(And a shocking bad one it is, by the way),
Blow a denser cloud from my stunted clay,
And then, friend Bell, as the Frenchmen say,
We 'll ' go back again to our muttons.'

There 's a lull in the tumult on yonder hill,
And the clamour has grown less loud,
Though the Babel of tongues is never still
With the presence of such a crowd.
The bell has rung. With their riders up
At the starting post they muster,
The racers stripp'd for the ' Melbourne Cup,'
All gloss and polish and lustre ;
And the course is seen, with its emerald sheen,
By the bright spring-tide renew'd,
Like a ribbon of green, stretched out between
The ranks of the multitude.

The flag is lowered. ' They 're off ! ' ' They come ! '
The squadron is sweeping on ;
A sway in the crowd—a murmuring hum :
' They're here ! ' ' They 're past ! ' ' They 're gone ! '
They came with the rush of the southern surf
On the bar of the storm-girt bay ;
And like muffled drums on the sounding turf
Their hoof-strokes echo away.



THEY CAME WITH THE RUSH OF THE SOUTHERN SURF
ON THE BAR OF THE STORM-GIRT BAY.

VISIONS IN THE SMOKE.

(Pages Page 200.)

The rose and black draws clear of the ruck,
And the murmur swells to a roar,
As the brave old colours that never were struck
Are seen with the lead once more.

Though the feathery ferns and grasses wave
O'er the sod where Lantern sleeps,
Though the turf is green on Fisherman's grave,
The stable its prestige keeps.

Six lengths in front she scours along,
She 's bringing the field to trouble,
She 's tailing them off, she 's running strong,
She shakes her head and pulls double.

Now Minstrel falters, and Exile flags,
The Barb finds the pace too hot,
And Toryboy loiters, and Playboy lags,
And the *bolt* of Ben Bolt is shot.

That she never may be caught this day,
Is the worst that the public wish her.

She won't be caught ; she comes right away ;
Hurrah for Seagull and Fisher !

See, Strop falls back, though his reins are slack,
Sultana begins to tire,

And the top-weight tells on the Sydney crack,
And the pace on ' the Gippsland flyer.'

The rowels, as round the turn they sweep,
Just graze Tim Whiffler's flanks ;

Like the hunted deer that flies through the sheep,
He strides through the beaten ranks.

Daughter of Omen, prove your birth,
 The colt will take lots of choking ;
 The hot breath steams at your saddle-girth,
 From his scarlet nostril smoking.

The shouts of the Ring for a space subside,
 And slackens the bookmakers' roar ;
 Now, Davis, rally ; now, Carter, ride,
 As man never rode before.
 When Sparrowhawk's backers cease to cheer,
 When Yattendon's friends are dumb,
 When hushed is the clamour for Volunteer—
 Alone in the race they come !

They 're neck and neck ; they 're head and head ;
 They 're stroke for stroke in the running ;
 The whalebone whistles, the steel is red,
 No shirking as yet nor shunning.
 One effort, Seagull, the blood you boast
 Should struggle when nerves are strained ;—
 With a rush on the post, by a neck at the most,
 The verdict for Tim is gained.

Tim Whiffler wins. Is blood alone
 The *sine qua non* for a flyer ?
 The breed of his dam is a myth unknown,
 And we 've doubts respecting his sire.
 Yet few (if any) those proud names are,
 On the pages of peerage or stud,
 In whose 'scutcheon lurks no sinister bar,
 No taint of the base black blood.

Aye, Shorthouse, laugh—laugh loud and long,
For pedigree you 're a sticker ;
You may be right, I may be wrong,
Wiseacres both ! Let 's liquor.
Our common descent we may each recall
To a lady of old caught tripping,
The fair one in fig leaves, who d—d us all
For a bite at a golden pippin.

When first on this rocky ledge I lay,
There was scarce a ripple in yonder bay,
The air was serenely still ;
Each column that sailed from my swarthy clay
Hung loitering long ere it passed away,
Though the skies wore a tinge of leaden grey,
And the atmosphere was chill.
But the red sun sank to his evening shroud,
Where the western billows are roll'd
Behind a curtain of sable cloud,
With a fringe of scarlet and gold ;
There 's a misty glare in the yellow moon,
And the drift is scudding fast,
There 'll be storm and rattle, and tempest
soon,
When the heavens are overcast.
The neutral tint of the sullen sea
Is fleck'd with the snowy foam,
And the distant gale sighs drearilie,
And the wanderer sighs for his home.

The white sea-horses toss their manes
On the bar of the southern reef,
And the breakers moan, and—by Jove, it rains
(I thought I should come to grief) ;
Though I can't well damage my shabby hat,
Though my coat looks best when it 's damp,
Since the shaking I got (no matter whereat),
I 've a mortal dread of the cramp.
My matches are wet, my pipe 's put out,
And the wind blows colder and stronger ;
I 'll be stiff, and sore, and sorry, no doubt,
If I lie here any longer.

PART II

THE FIELDS OF COLERAINE

On the fields of Col'raine there 'll be labour in vain
Before the Great Western is ended,
The nags will have toil'd, and the silks will be soil'd,
And the rails will require to be mended.
For the gullies are deep, and the uplands are steep,
And the mud will of purls be the token,
And the tough stringy-bark, that invites us to lark,
With impunity may not be broken.
Though Ballarat 's fast, and they say he can last,
And that may be granted hereafter,
Yet the judge's decision to the Border division
Will bring neither shouting nor laughter.

And Blueskin, I 've heard that he goes like a bird,
And I 'm told that to back him would pay me ;
He 's a good bit of stuff, but not quite good enough,
' *Non licuit credere famae.*'

Alfred ought to be there, we all of us swear
By the blood of King Alfred, his sire ;
He 's not the real jam, by the blood of his dam,
So I shan't put him down as a flyer.

Now, Hynam, my boy, I wish you great joy,
I know that when fresh you can jump, sir ;
But you 'll scarce be in clover when you 're ridden all over,
And punish'd from shoulder to rump, sir.

Archer goes like a shot, they can put on their pot,
And boil it to cover expenses ;
Their pot will boil over, the run of his Dover
He 'll never earn over big fences.

There 's a horse in the race, with a blaze on his face,
And we know he can gallop a docker ;
He 's proved himself stout, of his speed there 's no doubt,
And his jumping 's according to Cocker.

When Hynam 's outstript, and when Alfred is whipt,
To keep him in sight of the leaders,
While Blueskin runs true, but his backers look blue,
For his rider 's at work with the bleeders.

When his carcass of beef brings ' the bullock ' to grief,
 And the rush of the tartan is ended ;
 When Archer 's in trouble—who 's that pulling double,
 And taking his leaps unextended ?

He wins all the way, and the rest—sweet, they say,
 Is the smell of the newly-turn'd plough, friend,
 But you smell it too close when it stops eyes and nose,
 And you can't tell your horse from your cow, friend.

PART III

CREDAT JUDAEUS APELLA

Dear Bell—I enclose what you ask in a letter,
 A short rhyme at random, no more and no less,
 And you may insert it for want of a better,
 Or leave it, it doesn't much matter, I guess ;
 And as for a tip, why, there isn't much in it,
 I may hit the right nail, but first, I declare,
 I haven't a notion what 's going to win it
 (The Champion, I mean), and what 's more, I don't care.
 Imprimis, there 's Cowra—few nags can go quicker
 Than she can—and Smith takes his oath she can fly ;
 While Brown, Jones, and Robinson swear she 's a sticker,
 But ' Credat Judaeus Apella,' say I.

There 's old Volunteer, I 'd be sorry to sneer
 At his chance ; he 'll be there, if he goes at the rate
 He went at last year, when a customer queer,
 Johnny Higgeson, fancied him lock'd in the straight ;

I've heard that the old horse has never been fitter,

I've heard all performances past he'll outvie ;

He may gallop a docker, and finish a splitter,

But 'Credat Judaeus Apella,' say I.

I know what they say, sir, The Hook he can stay, sir,

And stick to his work like a sleuth-hound or beagle ;

He stays 'with a *hook*,' and he sticks in the clay, sir,

I'd rather, for choice, pop my money on Seagull ;

I'm told that the Sydney division will rue, sir,

Their rashness in front of the stand when they spy

With a clear lead the white jacket spotted with blue, sir,

But 'Credat Judaeus Apella,' say I.

There's The Barb—you may talk of your flyers and stayers,

All bosh—when he strips you can see his eye range

Round his rivals, with much the same look as Tom Sayers

Once wore, when he faced the big novice, Bill Bainge.

Like Stow, at our hustings, confronting the hisses

Of roughs, with his queer Mephistopheles' smile ;

Like Baker or Baker's more wonderful *Mrs.*,

The terror of blacks at the source of the Nile ;

Like Triton 'mid minnows ; like hawk among chickens ;

Like—anything better than everything else ;

He stands at the post. Now they're off ! the plot thickens !

Quoth Stanley to Davis, 'How is your pulse ?'

He skims o'er the smooth turf, he scuds through the mire,

He waits with them, passes them, bids them good-bye !

Two miles and three-quarters, cried Filgate, 'He'll tire.'

Oh ! 'Credat Judaeus Apella,' say I.

Lest my tale should come true, let me give you fair
warning,

You may 'shout' some cheroots, if you like, no
champagne

For this child.—'Oh! think of my head in the morning,'

Old chap, you don't get me on that lay again.

The last time those games I look'd likely to try on,

Says Bradshawe, 'You'll feel very sheepish and shy

When you are haul'd up and caution'd by D—g—y and
L—n,'

Oh! 'Credat Judaeus Apella,' say I.

This writing bad verses is very fatiguing,

The brain and the liver against it combine,

And nerves with digestion in concert are leaguering,

To punish excess in the pen and ink line;

Already I feel just as if I'd been rowing

Hard all—on a supper of onions and tripe

(A thing I abhor), but my steam I've done blowing,

I am, my dear Bell, yours truly, 'The Pipe.'

P.S.—Tell J. P., if he fancies a good 'un,

That old chestnut pony of mine is for sale.

N.B.—His forelegs are uncommonly wooden,

I fancy the near one's beginning to fail,

And why shouldn't I do as W—n does oft,

And swear that a cripple is sound—on the Bible—

Hold hard! though the man I allude to is soft,

He's game to go in for an action of libel.

PART IV

BANKER'S DREAM

Of chases and courses dogs dream, so do horses—

 Last night I was dozing and dreaming,
The crowd and the bustle were there, and the rustle
 Of the silk in the autumn sky gleaming.

The stand throng'd with faces, the broadcloths and laces,
 The booths, and the tents, and the cars,
The bookmakers' jargon, for odds making bargain,
 The nasty stale smell of cigars.

We form'd into line, 'neath the merry sunshine,
 Near the logs at the end of the railing ;
' Are you ready, boys ? Go ! ' cried the starter, and low
 Sank the flag, and away we went sailing.

In the van of the battle we heard the stones rattle,
 Some slogging was done, but no slaughter,
A shout from the stand, and the whole of our band
 Skimm'd merrily over the water.

Two fences we clear'd, and the roadway we near'd,
 When three of our troop came to trouble ;
Like a bird on the wing, or a stone from a sling,
 Flew Cadger, first over the double.

And Western was there, head and tail in the air,
And Pondon was there too—what noodle
Could so name a horse? I should feel some remorse
If I gave such a name to a poodle.

In and out of the line, to the racecourse again,
Craig's pony was first, I was third,
And Ingleside lit in my tracks, with the bit
In his teeth, and came up 'like a bird.'

In the van of the battle we heard the rails rattle,
Says he, 'Though I don't care for shunning
My share of the raps, I shall look out for gaps,
When the light-weight's away with the running.'

At the fence just ahead, the outsider still led,
The chestnut play'd follow my leader,
Oh! the devil-a gap, he went into it slap,
And he and his jock took a header.

Says Ingleside, 'Mate, should the pony go straight,
You've no time to stop or turn restive';
Says I, 'Who means to stop? I shall go till I drop';
Says he, 'Go it, old cuss, gay and festive.'

The fence stiff and tall, just beyond the log wall,
We cross'd, and the walls, and the water—
I took off too near, a small made fence to clear,
And just touch'd the grass with my snorter.



OF CHASES AND COURSES DOGS DREAM, SO DO HORSES:
LAST NIGHT I WAS DOZING AND DREAMING.

(*"BANKER'S DREAM."*)

(*Faces page 30.*)

At the next post and rail up went Western's bang tail,
And down (by the very same token)
To earth went his nose, for the panel he chose
Stood firm and refused to be broken.

I dreamt some one said that the bay would have made
The race safe, if he 'd *stood* a while longer ;
If he had—but, like if, there the panel stands stiff—
He stood, but the panel stood stronger.

In and out of the road, with a clear lead still show'd
The violet fluted with amber ;
Says Johnson, ' Old man, catch him now if you can,
'Tis the second time round, you 'll remember.'

At the road once again, pulling hard on the rein,
Craig's pony pop't in and pop't out ;
I followed like smoke and the pace was no joke,
For his friends were beginning to shout.

And Ingleside came to my side, strong and game,
And once he appear'd to outstrip me,
But I felt the steel gore, and I shot to the fore,
Only Cadger seemed likely to whip me.

In the van of the battle I heard the logs rattle,
His stroke never seem'd to diminish,
And thrice I drew near him, and thrice he drew clear
For the weight served him well at the finish.

Ha ! Cadger goes down, see, he stands on his crown—

Those rails take a power of clouting—

A long sliding blunder—he's up—well, I wonder

If now it's all over but shouting.

All loosely he's striding, the amateur's riding

All loosely, some reverie lock'd in

Of a 'vision in smoke,' or a 'wayfaring bloke,'

His poetical rubbish concocting.

Now comes from afar the faint cry 'Here they are,'

'The violet winning with ease,'

'Fred goes up like a shot,' 'Does he catch him or not?'

'Level money, I'll take the cerise.'

To his haunches I spring, and my muzzle I bring

To his flank, to his girth, to his shoulder ;

Through the shouting and yelling I hear my name swelling,

The hearts of my backers grow bolder.

Neck and neck ! head and head ! staring eye ! nostril spread !

Girth and stifle laid close to the ground !

Stride for stride ! stroke for stroke ! through one hurdle
we've broke !

On the splinters we've lit with one bound.

And 'Banker for choice' is the cry, and one voice

Screams 'Six to four once upon Banker' ;

'Banker wins,' 'Banker's beat,' 'Cadger wins,' 'A dead
heat'—

'Ah ! there goes Fred's whalebone a flanker.'

Springs the whip with a crack ! nine stone ten on his back,

Fit and light he can race like the devil ;

I draw past him—'tis vain ; he draws past me again,

Springs the whip ! and again we are level.

Steel and cord do their worst, now my head struggles first !

That tug my last spurt has expended—

Nose to nose ! lip to lip ! from the sound of the whip

He strains to the utmost extended,

How they swim through the air, as we roll to the chair,

Stand, faces, and railings flit past ;

Now I spring . . .

from my lair, with a snort and a stare,

Rous'd by Fred with my supper at last.

PART V

EX FUMO DARE LUCEM

(TWIXT THE CUP AND THE LIP)

PROLOGUE

Calm and clear ! the bright day is declining,

The crystal expanse of the bay,

Like a shield of pure metal, lies shining

'Twixt headlands of purple and grey,

While the little waves leap in the sunset,

And strike with a miniature shock,

In sportive and infantine onset,

The base of the iron-stone rock.

Calm and clear ! the sea-breezes are laden
With a fragrance, a freshness, a power,
With a song like the song of a maiden,
With a scent like the scent of a flower ;
And a whisper, half weird, half prophetic,
Comes home with a sigh of the surf—
But I pause, for your fancies poetic
Never rise from the level of ' Turf.'

Fellow-bungler of mine, fellow-sinner,
In public performances past,
In trials whence touts take their winner,
In rumours that circulate fast,
In strains from Prunella or Priam,
Staying stayers, or goers that go,
You 're much better posted than I am,
'Tis little I care, less I know.

Alas ! neither poet nor prophet
Am I, though a jingler of rhymes—
'Tis a hobby of mine, and I 'm off it
At times, and I 'm on it at times ;
And whether I 'm off it or on it,
Your readers my counsels will shun,
Since I scarce know Van Tromp from Blue Bonnet,
Though I might know Cigar from The Nun.

With ' visions ' you ought to be sated
And sicken'd by this time, I swear

That mine are all myths, self-created,
Air visions that vanish in air ;
If I had some loose coins I might chuck one,
To settle this question and say,
' Here goes ! this is tails for the black one,
And heads for my fav'rite, the bay.'

And must I rob Paul to pay Peter,
Or Peter defraud to pay Paul ?
My rhymes, are they stale ? if my metre
Is varied, one chime rings through all ;
One chime—though I sing more or sing less,
I have but one string to my lute,
And it might have been better if, stringless
And songless, the same had been mute.

Yet not as a seer of visions,
Nor yet as a dreamer of dreams,
I send you these partial decisions
On hackney'd, impoverish'd themes ;
But with song out of tune, sung to pass time,
Flung heedless to friends or to foes,
Where the false notes that ring for the last time
May blend with some real ones, who knows ?

THE RACE

On the hill they are crowding together,
In the stand they are crushing for room,
Like midge-flies they swarm on the heather,
They gather like bees on the broom ;

They flutter like moths round a candle—
 Stale similes, granted, what then ?
 I 've got a stale subject to handle,
 A very stale stump of a pen.

Hark ! the shuffle of feet that are many,
 Of voices that many-tongued clang—
 ' Has he had a bad night ? ' ' Has he any
 Friends left ? '—How I hate your turf
 slang ;
 'Tis stale to begin with, not witty,
 But dull and inclined to be coarse,
 But bad men can't use (more 's the pity)
 Good words when they slate a good horse.

Heu ! heu ! quantus equis (that 's Latin
 For ' bellows to mend ' with the weeds),
 They 're off ! lights and shades ! silk and satin !
 A rainbow of riders and steeds !
 And one shows in front, and another
 Goes up and is seen in his place,
Sic transit (more Latin)—Oh ! bother,
 Let 's get to the end of the race.

See, they come round the last turn careering,
 Already Tait's colours are struck,
 And the green in the vanguard is steering,
 And the red 's in the rear of the ruck !

Are the stripes in the shade doom'd to lie long ?

Do the blue stars on white skies wax dim ?

Is it Tamworth or Smuggler ? 'Tis Bylong

That wins—either Bylong or Tim.

As the shell through the breach that is riven

And sapp'd by the springing of mines,

As the bolt from the thunder-cloud driven,

That levels the larches and pines,

Through yon mass parti-colour'd that dashes

Goal-turn'd, clad in many-hued garb,

From rear to van, surges and flashes

The yellow and black of The Barb.

Past The Fly, falling back on the right, and

The Gull, giving way on the left,

Past Tamworth, who feels the whip smite, and

Whose sides by the rowels are cleft ;

Where Tim and the chestnut together

Still bear of the battle the brunt,

As if eight stone twelve were a feather,

He comes with a rush to the front.

Tim Whiffler may yet prove a Tartar,

And Bylong 's the horse that can stay,

But Kean is in trouble—and Carter

Is hard on the satin-skin'd bay ;

And The Barb comes away unextended,

Hard held, like a second Eclipse,

While behind, the hoof-thunder is blended
With the whistling and crackling of whips.

EPILOGUE

He wins ; yes, he wins upon paper,
He hasn't yet won upon turf,
And these rhymes are but moonshine and vapour,
Air-bubbles and spume from the surf.
So be it, at least they are given
Free, gratis, for just what they 're worth,
And (whatever there may be in heaven)
There 's little worth much upon earth.

When, with satellites round them, the centre
Of all eyes, hard press'd by the crowd,
The pair, horse and rider, re-enter
The gate, 'mid a shout long and loud,
You may feel as you might feel, just landed
Full length on the grass from the clip
Of a vicious cross-counter, right-handed,
Or upper-cut, whizzing from hip.

And that 's not so bad if you 're pick'd up
Discreetly, and carefully nursed ;
Loose teeth by the sponge are soon lick'd up,
And next time you *may* get home first.
Still I 'm not sure you 'd like it exactly
(Such tastes as a rule are acquired),
And you 'll find in a nutshell this fact lie,
Bruised optics are not much admired.

Do I bore you with vulgar allusions ?

Forgive me, I speak as I feel,

I 've ponder'd and made my conclusions—

As the mill grinds the corn to the meal ;

So man striving boldly but blindly,

Ground piecemeal in Destiny's mill,

At his best, taking punishment kindly,

Is only a chopping-block still.

Are we wise ? our abstruse calculations

Are based on experience long ;

Are we sanguine ? our high expectations

Are founded on hope that is strong ;

Thus we build an air-castle that crumbles

And drifts, till no traces remain,

And the fool builds again while he grumbles,

And the wise one laughs, building again.

' How came they to pass, these rash blunders,

These false steps so hard to defend ? '

Our friend puts the question and wonders,

We laugh and reply, ' Ah ! my friend,

Could you trace the first stride falsely taken,

The distance misjudged, where or how,

When you pick'd yourself up, stunn'd and shaken,

At the fence 'twixt the turf and the plough ?

' In the jar of the panel rebounding !

In the crash of the splintering wood !

In the ears to the earth shock resounding !

In the eyes flashing fire and blood !

In the quarters above you revolving !
In the sods underneath heaving high !
There was little to aid you in solving
Such questions—the how or the why.

‘ And Destiny, steadfast in trifles,
Is steadfast for better or worse,
In great things, it crushes and stifles,
And swallows the hopes that we nurse.
Men wiser than we are may wonder,
When the future they cling to so fast,
To the roll of that destiny’s thunder,
Goes down with the wrecks of the past.’

.
The past ! the dead past ! that has swallow’d
All the honey of life and the milk,
Brighter dreams than mere pastimes we’ve
follow’d,
Better things than our scarlet or silk ;
Aye, and worse things—that past is it really
Dead to us who again and again
Feel sharply, hear plainly, see clearly
Past days with their joy and their pain ?

Like corpses embalm’d and unburied
They lie, and in spite of our will,
Our souls on the wings of thought carried,
Revisit their sepulchres still ;

Down the channels of mystery gliding,
They conjure strange tales, rarely read,
Of the priests of dead Pharaohs presiding
At mystical feasts of the dead.

Weird pictures arise, quaint devices,
Rude emblems, baked funeral meats,
Strong incense, rare wines, and rich spices,
The ashes, the shrouds, and the sheets ;
Does our thralldom fall short of completeness
For the magic of a charnel-house charm,
And the flavour of a poisonous sweetness,
And the odour of a poisonous balm ?

And the links of the past—but, no matter,
For I 'm getting beyond you, I guess,
And you 'll call me ' as mad as a hatter '—
If my thoughts I too freely express ;
I subjoin a quotation, pray learn it,
And with the aid of your lexicon tell us
The meaning thereof, ' Res discernit
Sapiens, quas confundit asellus.'

Already green hillocks are swelling,
And combing white locks on the bar,
Where a dull, droning murmur is telling
Of winds that have gather'd afar ;

Thus we know not the day, nor the morrow,
Nor yet what the night may bring forth,
Nor the storm, nor the sleep, nor the sorrow,
Nor the strife, nor the rest, nor the wrath.

Yet the skies are still tranquil and starlit,
The sun 'twixt the wave and the west
Dies in purple, and crimson, and scarlet,
And gold ; let us hope for the best,
Since again from the earth his effulgence
The darkness and damp-dews shall wipe,
Kind reader, extend your indulgence
To this the last lay of ' The Pipe.'

THE SICK STOCKRIDER

HOLD hard, Ned ! Lift me down once more, and lay me
in the shade.

Old man, you 've had your work cut out to guide
Both horses, and to hold me in the saddle when I sway'd

All through the hot, slow, sleepy, silent ride.

The dawn at ' Moorabinda ' was a mist-rack dull and dense,

The sunrise was a sullen, sluggish lamp ;

I was dozing in the gateway at Arbuthnot's bound'ry fence,

I was dreaming on the Limestone cattle camp.

We crossed the creek at Carricksford, and sharply through
the haze,

And suddenly the sun shot flaming forth ;

To southward lay ' Katawa,' with the sand-peaks all ablaze,

And the flush'd fields of Glen Lomond lay to north.

Now westward winds the bridle-path that leads to Lindisfarm,

And yonder looms the double-headed Bluff ;

From the far side of the first hill, when the skies are clear
and calm,

You can see Sylvester's woolshed fair enough.

Five miles we used to call it from our homestead to the place

Where the big tree spans the roadway like an arch ;

'Twas here we ran the dingo down that gave us such a chase

Eight years ago—or was it nine ?—last March.

'Twas merry in the glowing morn, among the gleaming grass,
To wander as we 've wandered many a mile,
And blow the cool tobacco cloud, and watch the white
wreaths pass,
Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.
'Twas merry 'mid the blackwoods when we spied the station
roofs,
To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard,
With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of hoofs ;
Oh ! the hardest day was never then too hard !

Aye ! we had a glorious gallop after ' Starlight ' and his gang,
When they bolted from Sylvester's on the flat ;
How the sun-dried reed-beds crackled, how the flint-strewn
ranges rang
To the strokes of ' Mountaineer ' and ' Acrobat.'
Hard behind them in the timber, harder still across the
heath,
Close beside them through the tea-tree scrub we dashed ;
And the golden-tinted fern leaves, how they rustled under-
neath !
And the honeysuckle osiers, how they crashed !

We led the hunt throughout, Ned, on the chestnut and the
grey,
And the troopers were three hundred yards behind,
While we emptied our six-shooters on the bushrangers
at bay,
In the creek with stunted box-tree for a blind !

There you grappled with the leader, man to man and horse
to horse,

And you rolled together when the chestnut reared ;
He blazed away and missed you in that shallow water-
course—

A narrow shave—his powder singed your beard !

In these hours when life is ebbing, how those days when
life was young

Come back to us ; how clearly I recall
Even the yarns Jack Hall invented, and the songs Jem Roper
sung ;

And where are now Jem Roper and Jack Hall ?

Aye ! nearly all our comrades of the old colonial school,

Our ancient boon companions, Ned, are gone ;
Hard livers for the most part, somewhat reckless as a rule,
It seems that you and I are left alone.

There was Hughes, who got in trouble through that business
with the cards,

It matters little what became of him ;
But a steer ripp'd up MacPherson in the Cooraminta yards,
And Sullivan was drown'd at Sink-or-swim ;
And Mostyn—poor Frank Mostyn—died at last a fearful
wreck,

✂ In ' the horrors,' at the Upper Wandinong,
And Carisbrooke, the rider, at the Horsefall broke his neck,
Faith ! the wonder was he saved his neck so long

Ah ! those days and nights we squandered at the Logans'
in the Glen—

The Logans, man and wife, have long been dead.
Elsie's tallest girl seems taller than your little Elsie then ;
And Ethel is a woman grown and wed.

I 've had my share of pastime, and I 've done my share of
toil,

And life is short—the longest life a span ;
I care not now to tarry for the corn or for the oil,
Or for the wine that maketh glad the heart of man.
For good undone and gifts misspent and resolutions vain,
'Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I know—
I should live the same life over, if I had to live again ;
And the chances are I go where most men go.

The deep blue skies wax dusky and the tall green trees
grow dim,

The sward beneath me seems to heave and fall ;
And sickly, smoky shadows through the sleepy sunlight swim,
And on the very sun's face weave their pall.

Let me slumber in the hollow where the wattle blossoms
wave,

With never stone or rail to fence my bed ;
Should the sturdy station children pull the bush flowers on
my grave,

I may chance to hear them romping overhead.



WITH A RUNNING FIRE OF STOCKWHIPS AND A FERRY RUN OF HOOPS.

“THE SICK STOCKRIDER.”

(Faces page 46.)

THE ROMANCE OF BRITOMARTE

*As related by Sergeant Leigh on the Night he got his
Captaincy at the Restoration*

I 'LL tell you a story : but pass the ' jack,'
And let us make merry to-night, my men.
Aye, those were the days when my beard was black—
I like to remember them now and then—
Then Miles was living, and Cuthbert there
On his lip was never a sign of down.
But I carry about some braided hair
That has not yet changed from the glossy brown
That it show'd the day when I broke the heart
Of the bravest of destriers, ' Britomarte.'

Sir Hugh was slain (may his soul find grace !)
In the fray that was neither lost nor won
At Edgehill—then to St. Hubert's-chase
Lord Goring despatch'd a garrison—
But men and horses were ill to spare,
And ere long the soldiers were shifted fast.
As for me, I never was quarter'd there
Till Marston Moor had been lost ; at last,
As luck would have it, alone, and late
In the night, I rode to the northern gate.

I thought, as I pass'd through the moonlit park,
Of the boyish days I used to spend
In the halls of the knight lying stiff and stark—
Thought on his lady, my father's friend
(Mine, too, in spite of my sinister bar,
But with that my story has naught to do)—
She died the winter before the war—
Died giving birth to the baby Hugh.
He pass'd ere the green leaves clothed the bough,
And the orphan girl was the heiress now.

When I was a rude and a reckless boy,
And she a brave and a beautiful child,
I was her page, her playmate, her toy—
I have crown'd her hair with the field-flowers
wild,
Cowslip and crowfoot, and coltsfoot bright—
I have carried her miles when the woods were
wet,
I have read her romances of dame and knight—
She was my princess, my pride, my pet.
There was then this proverb us twain between,
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.

She had grown to a maiden wonderful fair,
But for years I had scarcely seen her face.
Now, with troopers Holdsworth, Huntly and Clare,
Old Miles kept guard at St. Hubert's-chase,

And the chatelaine was a Mistress Ruth,
Sir Hugh's half-sister, an ancient dame,
But a mettlesome soul had she forsooth,
As she show'd when the time of her trial came
I bore despatches to Miles and to her,
To warn them against the bands of Kerr.

And mine would have been a perilous ride
With the rebel horsemen—we knew not where
They were scatter'd over that countryside,—
If it had not been for my brave brown mare—
She was iron-sinew'd and satin-skinned,
Ribbed like a drum and limb'd like a deer,
Fierce as the fire and fleet as the wind—
There was nothing she couldn't climb or clear—
Rich lords had vex'd me, in vain, to part,
For their gold and silver, with Britomarte.

Next morn we muster'd scarce half a score
With the serving-men, who were poorly arm'd—
Five soldiers, counting myself, no more,
And a culverin, which might well have harm'd
Us, had we used it, but not our foes,
When, with horses and foot, to our doors they came,
And a psalm-singer summon'd us (through his nose),
And deliver'd—' This, in the people's name,
Unto whoso holdeth this fortress here,
Surrender ! or bide the siege—John Kerr.'

'Twas a mansion built in a style too new,
A castle by courtesy, he lied
Who called it a fortress—yet, 'tis true,
It had been indifferently fortified—
We were well provided with bolt and bar—
And while I hurried to place our men,
Old Miles was call'd to a council of war
With Mistress Ruth and with *her*, and when
They had argued loudly and long, those three,
They sent, as a last resource, for me.

In the chair of state sat erect Dame Ruth ;
She had cast aside her embroidery :
She had been a beauty, they say, in her youth,
There was much fierce fire in her bold black
eye.
' Am I deceived in you both ? ' quoth she,
' If one spark of her father's spirit lives
In this girl here—so, this Leigh, Ralph Leigh,
Let us hear what counsel the springald gives.'
Then I stammer'd, somewhat taken aback—
(Simon, you ale-swiller, pass the ' jack ').

The dame wax'd hotter—' Speak out, lad, say,
Must we fall in that canting caitiff's power ?
Shall we yield to a knave and a turncoat ? Nay,
I had liefer leap from our topmost tower

For a while we can surely await relief ;

Our walls are high and our doors are strong.'

This Kerr was indeed a canting thief—

I know not rightly, some private wrong

He had done Sir Hugh, but I know this much,

Traitor or turncoat he suffer'd as such.

Quoth Miles—' Enough ! your will shall be done ;

Relief may arrive by the merest chance,

But your house ere dusk will be lost and won ;

They have got three pieces of ordnance.'

Then I cried, ' Lord Guy, with four troops of horse,

Even now is bidding at Westbrooke town ;

If a rider could break through the rebel force,

He would bring relief ere the sun goes down ;

Through the postern door could I make one dart,

I could baffle them all upon Britomarte.'

Miles mutter'd ' Madness ! ' Dame Ruth look'd grave,

Said ' True, though we cannot keep one hour

The courtyard, no, nor the stables save,

They will have to batter piecemeal the tower,

And thus——' But suddenly she halted there.

With a shining hand on my shoulder laid,

Stood Gwendoline. She had left her chair,

And, ' Nay, if it needs must be done,' she said,

' Ralph Leigh will gladly do it, I ween,

For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.'

I had undertaken a heavier task
For a lighter word. I saddled with care,
Nor cumber'd myself with corselet nor casque
(Being loth to burden the brave brown mare).
Young Clare kept watch on the wall—he cried,
' Now, haste, Ralph ! this is the time to seize,
The rebels are round us on every side,
But here they straggle by twos and threes.'
Then out I led her, and up I sprung,
And the postern door on its hinges swung.

I had drawn this sword—you may draw it and
feel,
For this is the blade that I bore that day—
There 's a notch even now on the long grey steel,
A nick that has never been rasp'd away.
I bow'd my head and I buried my spurs,
One bound brought the gliding green beneath ;
I could tell by her back-flung flatten'd ears
She had fairly taken the bit in her teeth—
(What, Jack, have you drain'd your namesake dry,
Left nothing to quench the thirst of a fly ?)

These things are done, and are done with, lad,
In far less time than your talker tells.
The sward with their hoof-strokes shook like mad,
And rang with their carbines and petronels ;

And they shouted, ' Cross him and cut him off,'
 ' Surround him,' ' Seize him,' ' Capture the clown
Or kill him,' ' Shall he escape to scoff
 In your faces ? ' ' Shoot him or cut him down.'
And their bullets whistled on every side :
Many were near us and more were wide.

Not a bullet told upon Britomarte—
 Suddenly snorting, she launched along—
So the osprey dives where the seagulls dart,
 So the falcon swoops where the kestrels throng ;
And full in my front one pistol flash'd,
 And right in my path their sergeant got.
How our jack-boots jarr'd, how our stirrups clash'd,
 While the mare like a meteor past him shot ;
But I clove his skull with a backstroke clean,
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.

And as one whom the fierce wind storms in the face
 With spikes of hail and with splinters of rain,
I, while we fled through St. Hubert's-chase,
 Bent till my cheek was amongst her mane.
To the north full a league of the deer-park lay,
 Smooth, springy turf, and she fairly flew,
And the sound of their hoof-strokes died away,
 And their far shots faint in the distance grew
Loudly I laugh'd, having won the start,
At the folly of following Britomarte

They had posted a guard at the northern gate—
 Some dozen of pikemen and musketeers.
 To the tall park palings I turn'd her straight,
 She veer'd in her flight as the swallow veers—
 And some blew matches and some drew swords,
 And one of them wildly hurl'd his pike,
 But she clear'd by inches the oaken boards,
 And she carried me yards beyond the dyke ;
 Then gaily over the long green down
 We gallop'd, heading for Westbrooke town.

The green down slopes to the great grey moor,
 The grey moor sinks to the gleaming Skelt—
 Sudden and sullen, and swift and sure,
 The whirling water was round my belt—
 She breasted the bank with a savage snort
 And a backward glance of her bloodshot eye,
 And ' Our Lady of Andover's ' flash'd like
 thought,
 And flitted St. Agatha's Nunnery,
 And the firs at ' The Ferngrove ' fled on the right,
 And ' Falconer's Tower ' on the left took flight.

And over ' The Ravenswold ' we raced—
 We rounded the hill by ' The Hermit's Well '—
 We burst on the Westbrooke Bridge — ' What
 haste ?
 What errand ? ' shouted the sentinel.

' To Beelzebub with the Brewer's knave,'
 ' Carolus Rex and he of the Rhine,'
Galloping past him, I got and gave
 In the gallop password and countersign,
All soak'd with water and soil'd with mud,
With the sleeve of my jerkin half drench'd in blood.

Now, Heaven be praised that I found him there—
 Lord Guy—he said, having heard my tale,
' Leigh, let my own man look to your mare,
 Rest and recruit with our wine and ale ;
But first must our surgeon attend to you ;
 You are somewhat shrewdly stricken, no doubt.'
Then he snatch'd a horn from the wall and blew,
 Making ' boot and saddle ' ring sharply out.
' Have I done good service this day ? ' quoth I.
' Then I will ride back in your troop, Lord Guy.'

In the street I heard how the trumpets peal'd
 And I caught the gleam of a morion
From the window—then to the door I reel'd ;
 I had lost more blood than I reckon'd upon ;
He eyed me calmly with keen grey eyes—
 Stern grey eyes of a steel blue grey—
Said, ' The wilful man can never be wise,
 Nathless the wilful must have his way,'
And he pours from a flagon some fiery wine,
I drain'd it, and straightway strength was mine.

.

I was with them all the way on the brown—
‘Guy to the rescue!’ ‘God and the king!’
We were just in time, for the doors were down;
And didn’t our sword-blades rasp and ring,
And didn’t we hew, and didn’t we hack;
The sport scarce lasted minutes ten—
(Aye, those were the days when my beard was
black:

I like to remember them now and then).
Though they fought like fiends, we were four to one,
And we captured those that refused to run.

We have not forgotten it, Cuthbert, boy!
That supper scene when the lamps were lit;
How the women (some of them) sobb’d for joy,
How the soldiers drank the deeper for it;
How the Dame did honours, and Gwendoline,
How grandly she glided into the hall,
How she stoop’d with the grace of a girlish queen
And kiss’d me gravely before them all;
And the stern Lord Guy, how gaily he laugh’d,
Till more of his cup was spilt than quaff’d.

Brown Britomarte lay dead in her straw
Next morn—we buried her—brave old girl!
John Kerr, we tried him by martial law,
And we twisted some hemp for the trait’rous
churl;

And she, I met her alone. Said she,
 ' You have risked your life, you have lost your mare,
 And what can I give in return, Ralph Leigh ? '
 I replied, ' One braid of that bright brown hair.'
 And with that she bow'd her beautiful head,
 ' You can take as much as you choose,' she said.

And I took it, it may be, more than enough—
 And I shore it rudely, close to the roots,
 The wine or wounds may have made me rough,
 And men at the bottom are merely brutes.
 Three weeks I slept at St. Hubert's-chase ;
 When I woke from the fever of wounds and wine,
 I could scarce believe that the ghastly face
 That the glass reflected was really mine.
 I sought the hall—where a wedding *had been*—
 The wedding of Guy and of Gwendoline.

The romance of a grizzled old trooper's life
 May make you laugh in your sleeves : laugh out,
 Lads ; we have most of us seen some strife ;
 We have all of us had some sport, no doubt.
 I have won some honour and gain'd some gold,
 Now that our king returns to his own ;
 If the pulses beat slow, if the blood runs cold,
 And if friends have faded and loves have flown,
 Then the greater reason is ours to drink,
 And the more we swallow the less we shall think.

At the battle of Naseby, Miles was slain,
And Huntly sank from his wounds that week ;
We left young Clare upon Worcester plain—
How the ' ironside ' gash'd his girlish cheek.
Aye, strut, and swagger, and ruffle anew,
Gay gallants, now that the war is done !
They fought like fiends (give the fiend his
due)—
We fought like fops, it was thus they won.
Holdsworth is living for aught I know,
At least he was living two years ago.

And Guy—Lord Guy—so stately and stern,
He is changed, I met him at Winchester ;
He has grown quite gloomy and taciturn.
Gwendoline—why do you ask for her ?
Died ! as her mother had died before—
Died giving birth to the baby Guy !
Did my voice shake ? Then am I fool the
more.
Sooner or later we all must die :
But, at least, let us live while we live to-night.
The *days* may be dark, but the *lamps* are bright.

For to me the sunlight seems worn and wan :
The sun, he is losing his splendour now—
He can never shine as of old he shone
On her glorious hair and glittering brow.

Ah ! those *days that were*, when my beard was black,

Now I have only the *nights that are*.

What, landlord, ho ! bring in haste burnt sack

And a flask of your fiercest usquebaugh.

You, Cuthbert ! surely you know by heart

The story of *her* and of Britomarte.

WOLF AND HOUND

'The hills like giants at a hunting lay
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay.'

BROWNING.

YOU 'LL take my tale with a little salt,
But it needs none, nevertheless,
I was foil'd completely, fairly at fault,
Dishearten'd, too, I confess.
At the splitters' tent I had seen the track
Of horse-hoofs fresh on the sward,
And though Darby Lynch and Donovan Jack
(Who could swear through a ten-inch board)
Solemnly swore he had not been there,
I was just as sure that they lied,
For to Darby all that is foul was fair,
And Jack for his life was tried.

We had run him for seven miles and more
As hard as our nags could split ;
At the start they were all too weary and sore,
And his was quite fresh and fit.
Young Marsden's pony had had enough
On the plain, where the chase was hot ;
We breasted the swell of the Bittern's Bluff,
And Mark couldn't raise a trot ;

When the sea, like a splendid silver shield,
 To the south-west suddenly lay ;
On the brow of the Beetle, the chestnut reel'd,
 And I bid good-bye to M'Crea—
And I was alone when the mare fell lame,
 With a pointed flint in her shoe,
On the Stony Flats : I had lost the game,
 And what was a man to do ?

I turned away with no fixed intent
 And headed for Hawthorndell ;
I could neither eat in the splitters' tent
 Nor drink at the splitters' well ;
I knew that they gloried in my mishap,
 And I cursed them between my teeth—
A blood-red sunset through Brayton's Gap
 Flung a lurid fire on the heath.

Could I reach the Dell ? I had little reck,
 And with scarce a choice of my own
I threw the reins on Miladi's neck—
 I had freed her foot from the stone.
That season most of the swamps were dry,
 And after so hard a burst
In the sultry noon of so hot a sky
 She was keen to appease her thirst—
Or by instinct urged or impelled by fate—
 I care not to solve these things—
Certain it is that she took me straight
 To the Warrigal water springs.

I can shut my eyes and recall the ground
As though it were yesterday—
With a shelf of the low, grey rocks girt round
The springs in their basin lay ;
Woods to the east and wolds to the north
In the sundown sullenly bloom'd ;
Dead black on a curtain of crimson cloth
Large peaks to the westward loomed.
I led Miladi through weed and sedge,
She leisurely drank her fill ;
There was something close to the water's edge,
And my heart with one leap stood still,
For a horse's shoe and a rider's boot
Had left clean prints on the clay ;
Some one had water'd his beast on foot.
'Twas he—he had gone. Which way ?
Then the mouth of the cavern faced me fair,
As I turned and fronted the rocks ;
So, at last, I had pressed the wolf to his lair,
I had run to his earth the fox.

I thought so. Perhaps he was resting. Perhaps
He was waiting, watching for me.
I examined all my revolver caps,
I hitched my mare to a tree—
I had sworn to have him, alive or dead,
And to give him a chance was loth.
He knew his life had been forfeited—
He had even heard of my oath.

In my stocking'd soles to the shelf I crept,
I crawl'd safe into the cave—
All silent—if he was there he slept
Not there All dark as the grave.

Through the crack I could hear the leaden hiss !
See the livid face through the flame !
How strange it seems that a man should miss
When his life depends on his aim !
'There couldn't have been a better light
For him, nor a worse for me.
We were coop'd up, caged, like beasts for a fight,
And dumb as dumb beasts were we.

Flash ! flash ! bang ! bang ! and we blazed away,
And the grey roof reddened and rang ;
Flash ! flash ! and I felt his bullet flay
The tip of my ear. Flash ! bang !
Bang ! flash ! and my pistol arm fell broke ;
I struck with my left hand then—
Struck at a corpse through a cloud of smoke—
I had shot him dead in his den !

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

HYS BALLAD

In Eight Fyttes

FYTTE I

BY WOOD AND WOLD

(A PREAMBLE)

'Beneath the greenwood bough.'

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

LIGHTLY the breath of the spring wind blows,
Though laden with faint perfume,
'Tis the fragrance rare that the bushman knows,
The scent of the wattle bloom.
Two-thirds of our journey at least are done,
Old horse ! let us take a spell
In the shade from the glare of the noonday sun,
Thus far we have travell'd well ;
Your bridle I 'll slip, your saddle ungirth,
And lay them beside this log,
For you 'll roll in that track of reddish earth,
And shake like a water-dog.



I REMEMBER THE LOWERING, WINTRY MORN AND THE MIST ON THE COTSWOLD HILLS.

(BY FLOOD AND FIELD.)

[Page page 94.]

Upon yonder rise there 's a clump of trees—
 Their shadows look cool and broad—
 You can crop the grass as fast as you please
 While I stretch my limbs on the sward ;
 'Tis pleasant, I ween, with a leafy screen
 O'er the weary head, to lie
 On the mossy carpet of emerald green,
 'Neath the vault of the azure sky ;
 Thus all alone by the wood and wold,
 I yield myself once again
 To the memories old, that like tales fresh told,
 Come flitting across the brain.

FYTTE II

BY FLOOD AND FIELD

(A LEGEND OF THE COTTISWOLD)

'They have saddled a hundred milk-white steeds,
 They have bridled a hundred black.'—*Old Ballad.*
 'He turned in his saddle, now follow who dare.
 I ride for my country, quoth . . .'

LAWRENCE.

I remember the lowering wintry morn,
 And the mist on the Cotswold hills,
 When I once heard the blast of the huntsman's horn,
 Not far from the seven rills.
 Jack Esdale was there, and Hugh St. Clair,
 Bob Chapman, and Andrew Kerr,
 And big George Griffiths on Devil-May-Care,
 And—black Tom Oliver.

And one who rode on a dark brown steed,
Clean-jointed, sinewy, spare,
With the lean game head of the Blacklock
breed,
And the resolute eye that loves the lead,
And the quarters massive and square—
A tower of strength, with a promise of speed
(There was Celtic blood in the pair).
I remember how merry a start we got,
When the red fox broke from the gorse,
In a country so deep, with a scent so hot,
That the hound could outpace the horse ;
I remember how few in the front rank show'd,
How endless appeared the tail,
On the brown hill-side, where we cross'd the
road
And headed towards the vale.
The dark brown steed on the left was there,
On the right was a dappled grey,
And between the pair on a chestnut mare
The duffer who writes this lay.
What business had ' this child ' there to ride ?
But little or none at all ;
Yet I held my own for a while in ' the pride
That goeth before a fall.'
Though rashness can hope for but one result,
We are heedless when fate draws nigh us,
And the maxim holds good, ' Quem perdere vult
Deus, dementat prius.'

The right-hand man to the left-hand said,
As down in the vale we went,
' Harden your heart like a millstone, Ned,
And set your face as flint ;
Solid and tall is the rasping wall
That stretches before us yonder ;
You must have it at speed or not at all,
'Twere better to halt than to ponder,
For the stream runs wide on the take-off side,
And washes the clay bank under ;
Here goes for a pull, 'tis a madman's ride,
And a broken neck if you blunder.'
No word in reply his comrade spoke,
Nor waver'd, nor once look'd round,
But I saw him shorten his horse's stroke
As we splash'd through the marshy ground ;
I remember the laugh that all the while
On his quiet features play'd—
So he rode to his death, with that careless
smile,
In the van of the ' Light Brigade ' ;
So stricken by Russian grape, the cheer
Rang out while he toppled back,
From the shattered lungs as merry and clear
As it did when it roused the pack.
Let never a tear his memory stain,
Give his ashes never a sigh,
One of many who perished, NOT IN VAIN,
AS A TYPE OF OUR CHIVALRY—

I remember one thrust he gave to his hat,
 And two to the flanks of the brown,
 And still as a statue of old he sat,
 And he shot to the front, hands down ;
 I remember the snort and the stag-like bound
 Of the steed six lengths to the fore,
 And the laugh of the rider while, landing sound,
 He turned in his saddle and glanced around ;
 I remember—but little more,
 Save a bird's-eye gleam of the dashing stream,
 A jarring thud on the wall,
 A shock and the blank of a nightmare's dream—
 I was down with a stunning fall.

FYTTE III

ZU DER EDLEN JAGD

(A TREATISE ON TREES—VINE-TREE v. SADDLE-TREE)

'Now, welcome, welcome, masters mine,
 Thrice welcome to the noble chase,
 Nor earthly sport, nor sport divine,
 Can take such honourable place.'

Ballad of the Wild Huntsman.

(Free Translation.)

I remember some words my father said,
 When I was an urchin vain ;—
 God rest his soul, in his narrow bed
 These ten long years he hath lain.

When I think one drop of the blood he bore

 This faint heart surely must hold,

It may be my fancy and nothing more,

 But the faint heart seemeth bold.

He said, that as from the blood of grape,

 Or from juice distilled from the grain,

False vigour, soon to evaporate,

 Is lent to nerve and brain ;

So the coward will dare on the gallant horse

 What he never would dare alone,

Because he exults in a borrowed force,

 And a hardihood not his own.

And it may be so, yet this difference lies

 'Twixt the vine and the saddle-tree,

The spurious courage that drink supplies

 Sets our baser passions free ;

But the stimulant which the horseman feels

 When he gallops fast and straight,

To his better nature most appeals,

 And charity conquers hate.

As the kindly sunshine thaws the snow,

 E'en malice and spite will yield,

We could almost welcome our mortal foe

 In the saddle by flood and field ;

And chivalry dawns in the merry tale

 That ' Market Harborough ' writes,

And the yarns of ' Nimrod ' and ' Martingale '

 Seem legends of loyal knights.

Now tell me for once, old horse of mine,
 Grazing round me loose and free,
 Does your ancient equine heart repine
 For a burst in such companie,
 Where ' the *Powers* that be ' in the front rank ride,
 To hold your own with the throng,
 Or to plunge at ' Faugh a Ballagh's ' side
 In the rapids of Dandenong ?

Don't tread on my toes, you 're no foolish weight,
 So I found to my cost, as under
 Your carcass I lay, when you rose too late,
 Yet I blame you not for the blunder.
 What ! sulky, old man, your under-lip falls !
 You think I, too, ready to rail am
 At your kinship remote to that duffer at walls,
 The talkative roadster of Balaam.

FYTTE IV

IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS

(A LOGICAL DISCUSSION)

' Then hey for boot and horse, lad !
 And round the world away !
 Young blood will have its course, lad !
 And every dog his day ! '

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

There 's a formula which the west country clowns
 Once used, ere their blows fell thick,
 At the fairs on the Devon and Cornwall downs,
 In their bouts with the single-stick.

You may read a moral, not far amiss,
If you care to moralise,
In the crossing guard, where the ash-plants
kiss,
To the words ' God spare our eyes.'
No game was ever yet worth a rap
For a rational man to play,
Into which no accident, no mishap,
Could possibly find its way.

If you hold the willow, a shooter from Wills
May transform you into a hopper,
And the football meadow is rife with spills,
If you feel disposed for a cropper ;
In a rattling gallop with hound and horse
You may chance to reverse the medal
On the sward, with the saddle your loins
across,
And your hunter's loins on the saddle ;
In the stubbles you 'll find it hard to frame
A remonstrance firm, yet civil,
When oft as ' our mutual friend ' takes aim,
Long odds may be laid on the rising game,
And against your gaiters level ;
There 's danger even where fish are caught
To those who a wetting fear ;
For what 's worth having must aye be bought
And sport 's like life and life 's like sport,
' It ain't all skittles and beer.'

The honey-bag lies close to the sting,
The rose is fenced by the thorn,
Shall we leave to others their gathering,
And turn from clustering fruits that cling
To the garden wall in scorn ?
Albeit those purple grapes hang high,
Like the fox in the ancient tale,
Let us pause and try, ere we pass them by,
Though we, like the fox, may fail.

All hurry is worse than useless ; think
On the adage, ' 'Tis pace that kills ' ;
Shun bad tobacco, avoid strong drink,
Abstain from Holloway's pills,
Wear woollen socks, they 're the best you 'll
find,
Beware how you leave off flannel ;
And, whatever you do, don't change your
mind
When once you have picked your panel ;
With a bank of cloud in the south-south-east
Stand ready to shorten sail ;
Fight shy of a corporation feast ;
Don't trust to a martingale ;
Keep your powder dry, and shut one eye,
Not both, when you touch your trigger ;
Don't stop with your head too frequently
(This advice ain't meant for a nigger) ;

Look before you leap, if you like, but if
 You mean leaping, don't look long,
Or the weakest place will soon grow stiff,
 And the strongest doubly strong ;
As far as you can, to every man,
 Let your aid be freely given,
And hit out straight, 'tis your shortest plan,
 When against the ropes you 're driven.

Mere pluck, though not in the least sublime,
 Is wiser than blank dismay,
Since ' No sparrow can fall before its time,'
 And we 're valued higher than they ;
So hope for the best, and leave the rest
 In charge of a stronger hand,
Like the honest boors in the far-off west,
 With the formula terse and grand.

They were men, for the most part rough and rude,
 Dull and illiterate,
But they nursed no quarrel, they cherished no feud,
 They were strangers to spite and hate ;
In a kindly spirit they took their stand,
 That brothers and sons might learn
How a man should uphold the sports of his land,
And strike his best with a strong right hand,
 And take his strokes in return.

' 'Twas a barbarous practice,' the Quaker cries,
 ' 'Tis a thing of the past, thank Heaven '—
 Keep your thanks till the combative instinct dies
 With the taint of the olden leaven ;
 Yes, the times are changed, for better or worse,
 The prayer that no harm befall
 Has given its place to a drunken curse,
 And the manly game to a brawl.
 Our burdens are heavy, our natures weak,
 Some pastime devoid of harm
 May we look for ? ' Puritan elder, speak ! '
 ' Yea, friend, peradventure thou mayest seek
 Recreation singing a psalm.'
 If I did, your visage so grim and stern
 Would relax in a ghastly smile,
 For of music I never one note could learn,
 And my feeble minstrelsy would turn
 Your chant to discord vile.

Tho' the Philistine's mail could naught avail,
 Nor the spear like a weaver's beam,
 There are episodes yet in the Psalmist's tale,
 To obliterate which his poems fail,
 Which his exploits fail to redeem.
 Can the Hittite's wrongs forgotten be ?
 Does HE warble '*Non nobis, Domine,*'
 With his monarch in blissful concert, free
 From all malice to flesh inherent ;



NO GAME WAS EVER YET WORTH A RAP FOR A RATIONAL MAN TO PLAY
INTO WHICH NO ACCIDENT, NO MISHAP, COULD POSSIBLY FIND ITS WAY.

EX UTRUMQUE PARATUS.)

(Faces page 74.)

Zeruiah's offspring, who served so well,
Yet between the horns of the altar fell—
Does HIS voice the '*Quid gloriaris*' swell,
Or the '*Quare fremuerunt*' ?
It may well be thus, where DAVID sings,
And Uriah joins in the chorus,
But while earth to earthy matter clings,
Neither you nor the bravest of Judah's kings
As a pattern can stand before us.

FYTTE V

LEX TALIONIS

(A MORAL DISCOURSE)

'And if there's blood upon his hand,
'Tis but the blood of deer,'

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

To beasts of the field, and fowls of the air,
And fish of the sea alike,
Man's hand is ever slow to spare,
And ever ready to strike ;
With a licence to kill, and to work our will,
In season by land or by water,
To our heart's content we may take our fill
Of the joys we derive from slaughter.

And few, I reckon, our rights gainsay
In this world of rapine and wrong,
Where the weak and the timid seem lawful prey
For the resolute and the strong ;

Fins, furs, and feathers, they are and were
For our use and pleasure created,
We can shoot, and hunt, and angle, and snare,
Unquestioned, if not unsated.

I have neither the will nor the right to blame,
Yet to many (though not to all)
The sweets of destruction are somewhat tame
When no personal risks befall ;
Our victims suffer but little, we trust
(Mere guess-work and blank enigma),
If they suffer at all, our field sports must
Of cruelty bear the stigma.

Shall we, hard-hearted to their fates, thus
Soft-hearted shrink from our own,
When the measure we mete is meted to us,
When we reap as we 've always sown ?
Shall we who for pastime have squander'd life,
Who are styled ' the Lords of Creation,'
Recoil from our chance of more equal strife,
And our risk of retaliation ?

Though short is the dying pheasant's pain,
Scant pity you may well spare,
And the partridge slain is a triumph vain,
And a risk that a child may dare ;
You feel, when you lower the smoking gun,
Some ruth for yon slaughtered hare,

And hit or miss, in your selfish fun
The widgeon has little share.

But you 've no remorseful qualms or pangs
When you kneel by the grizzly's lair,
On that conical bullet your sole chance hangs,
'Tis the weak one's advantage fair,
And the shaggy giant's terrific fangs
Are ready to crush and tear ;
Should you miss, one vision of home and friend,
Five words of unfinish'd prayer,
Three savage knife-stabs, so your sport ends
In the worrying grapple that chokes and rends ;—
Rare sport, at least, for the bear.
Short shrift ! sharp fate ! dark doom to dree !
Hard struggle, tho' quickly ending !
At home or abroad, by land or sea,
In peace or war, sore trials must be,
And worse may happen to you or to me,
For none are secure, and none can flee
From a destiny impending.

Ah ! friend, did you think when the *London* sank,
Timber by timber, plank by plank,
In a cauldron of boiling surf,
How alone at least, with never a flinch,
In a rally contested inch by inch,
You could fall on the trampled turf ?
When a livid wall of the sea leaps high,
In the lurid light of a leaden sky,

And bursts on the quarter railing ;
 While the howling storm-gust seems to vie
 With the crash of splintered beams that fly,
 Yet fails too oft to smother the cry
 Of women and children wailing ?

Then those who listen in sinking ships,
 To despairing sobs from their lov'd one's lips,
 Where the green wave thus slowly shatters,
 May long for the crescent-claw that rips
 The bison into ribbons and strips,
 And tears the strong elk to tatters.
 Oh ! sunderings short of body and breath !
 Oh ! ' battle and murder and sudden death !'
 Against which the Liturgy preaches ;
 By the will of a just, yet a merciful Power,
 Less bitter, perchance, in the mystic hour,
 When the wings of the shadowy angel lower,
 Than man in his blindness teaches !

FYTTE VI

POTTERS' CLAY

(AN ALLEGORICAL INTERLUDE)

'Nec propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.'

Though the pitcher that goes to the sparkling rill
 Too often gets broken at last,
 There are scores of others its place to fill
 When the earth to the earth is cast ;

Keep that pitcher at home, let it never roam,
 But lie like a useless clod,
 Yet sooner or later the hour will come
 When its chips are thrown to the sod.

Is it wise, then, say, in the waning day,
 When the vessel is crackt and old,
 To cherish the battered potters' clay,
 As though it were virgin gold ?
 Take care of yourself, dull, boorish elf,
 Though prudent and safe you seem,
 Your pitcher will break on its musty shelf,
 And mine by the dazzling stream.

FYTTE VII

CITO PEDE PRETERIT AETAS

(A PHILOSOPHICAL DISSERTATION)

' Gillian's dead, God rest her bier—
 How I loved her many years syne ;
 Marion's married, but I sit here,
 Alive and merry at three-score year,
 Dipping my nose in Gascoigne wine.'
Wamba's Song—THACKERAY.

A mellower light doth Sol afford,
 His meridian glare has passed,
 And the trees on the broad and sloping sward
 Their length'ning shadows cast.
 ' Time flies.' The current will be no joke,
 If swollen by recent rain,

To cross in the dark, so I 'll have a smoke,
And then I 'll be off again.

What 's up, old horse ? Your ears you prick,
And your eager eyeballs glisten ;
'Tis the wild dog's note, in the tea-tree thick,
By the river, to which you listen.
With head erect, and tail flung out,
For a gallop you seem to beg,
But I feel the qualm of a chilling doubt
As I glance at your fav'rite leg.

Let the dingo rest, 'tis all for the best,
In this world there 's room enough
For him and you and me and the rest,
And the country is awful rough.
We 've had our gallop in days of yore,
Now down the hill we must run ;
Yet at times we long for one gallop more,
Although it were only one.

Did our spirits quail at a new four-rail,
Could a ' double ' double-bank us,
Ere nerve and sinew began to fail
In the consulship of Plancus ?
When our blood ran rapidly, and when
Our bones were pliant and limber,
Could we stand a merry cross-counter then,
A slogging fall over timber ?

Arcades ambo ! Duffers both,
In our best of days, alas !
(I tell the truth, though to tell it loth)
'Tis time we were gone to grass ;
The young leaves shoot, the sere leaves fall,
And the old gives way to the new,
While the preacher cries, ' 'Tis vanity all,
And vexation of spirit too.'

Now over my head the vapours curl
From the bowl of the soothing clay,
In the misty forms that eddy and whirl
My thoughts are flitting away ;
Yes, the preacher 's right, 'tis vanity all,
But the sweeping rebuke he showers
On vanities all may heaviest fall
On vanities worse than ours.

We have no wish to exaggerate
The worth of the sports we prize,
Some toil for their church, and some for their state,
And some for their merchandise ;
Some traffic and trade in the city's mart,
Some travel by land and sea,
Some follow science, some cleave to art,
And some to scandal and tea ;

And some for their country and their queen
Would fight, if the chance they had,

Good sooth, 'twere a sorry world, I ween,
If we all went galloping mad ;
Yet if once we efface the joys of the chase
From the land, and outroot the stud,
GOOD-BYE TO THE ANGLO-SAXON RACE !
FAREWELL TO THE NORMAN BLOOD !

Where the burn runs down to the uplands brown
From the heights of the snowclad range,
What anodyne drawn from the stifling town
Can be reckoned a fair exchange
For the stalker's stride, on the mountain side,
In the bracing northern weather,
To the slopes where couch, in their antler'd pride,
The deer on the perfum'd heather.

Oh ! the vigour with which the air is rife !
The spirit of joyous motion ;
The fever, the fulness of animal life,
Can be drain'd from no earthly potion !
The lungs with the living gas grow light,
And the limbs feel the strength of ten,
While the chest expands with its madd'ning might,
GOD'S GLORIOUS OXYGEN.

Thus the measur'd stroke, on elastic sward,
Of the steed three parts extended,
Hard held, the breath of his nostrils broad,
With the golden ether blended ;

Then the leap, the rise from the springy turf,
The rush through the buoyant air,
And the light shock landing—the veriest serf
Is an emperor then and there !

Such scenes ! sensation and sound and sight !
To some undiscover'd shore
On the current of Time's remorseless flight,
Have they swept to return no more ?
While, like phantoms bright of the fever'd night,
That have vex'd our slumbers of yore,
You follow us still in your ghostly might,
Dead days that have gone before.

Vain dreams, again and again retold,
Must you crowd on the weary brain,
Till the fingers are cold that entwin'd of old
Round foil and trigger and rein,
Till stay'd for aye are the roving feet,
Till the restless hands are quiet,
Till the stubborn heart has forgotten to beat,
Till the hot blood has ceas'd to riot.

In Exeter Hall the saint may chide,
The sinner may scoff outright,
The Bacchanal steep'd in the flagon's tide,
Or the sensual Sybarite ;

But NOLAN's name will flourish in fame
 When our galloping days are past,
 When we go from the place from whence we came,
 Perchance to find rest at last.

Thy riddles grow dark, oh ! drifting cloud,
 And thy misty shapes grow drear,
 Thou hang'st in the air like a shadowy shroud,
 But I am of lighter cheer ;
 Though our future lot is a sable blot,
 Though the wise ones on earth will blame us,
 Though our saddles will rot, and our rides be forgot,
 ' DUM VIVIMUS, VIVAMUS ! '

FYTTE VIII

FINIS EXOPTATUS

(A METAPHYSICAL SONG)

' There 's somewhat in this world amiss
 Shall be unriddled by and by.'

TENNYSON.

Boot and saddle, see, the slanting
 Rays begin to fall,
 Flinging lights and colours flaunting
 Through the shadows tall.
 Onward ! onward ! must we travel ?
 When will come the goal ?
 Riddle I may not unravel,
 Cease to vex my soul.



TO THE SLOPES WHERE COUCH IN THEIR ANTLER'D PRIDE
THE DEER IN THE PERFUM'D HEATHER.

“GIVE PRIDE PRETENTLY AWAY.”

(Faces page 81.)

Harshly breaks those peals of laughter

From the jays aloft,

Can we guess what they cry after,

We have heard them oft ;

Perhaps some strain of rude thanks-
giving

Mingles in their song,

Are they glad that they are living ?

Are they right or wrong ?

Right, 'tis joy that makes them call so,

Why should they be sad ?

Certes ! we are living also,

Shall we not be glad ?

Onward ! onward ! must we travel ?

Is the goal more near ?

Riddle we may not unravel,

Why so dark and drear ?

Yon small bird his hymn outpouring

On the branch close by,

Recks not for the kestrel soaring

In the nether sky,

Though the hawk with wings extended

Poises over head,

Motionless as though suspended

By a viewless thread.

See, he stoops, nay, shooting forward

With the arrow's flight,

Swift and straight away to nor'ward

Sails he out of sight.

Onward ! onward ! thus we travel,
Comes the goal more nigh ?
Riddle we may not unravel,
Who shall make reply ?

Ha ! Friend Ephraim, saint or sinner,
Tell me if you can—
Tho' we may not judge the inner
By the outer man,
Yet by girth of broadcloth ample,
And by cheeks that shine,
Surely you set no example
In the fasting line—
Could you, like yon bird, discov'ring
Fate as close at hand,
As the kestrel o'er him hov'ring,
Still, as he did, stand ?
Trusting grandly, singing gaily,
Confident and calm,
Not one false note in your daily
Hymn or weekly psalm ?
Oft your oily tones are heard in
Chapel, where you preach,
This the everlasting burden
Of the tale you teach :
' We are d—d, our sins are deadly,
You alone are heal'd '—
'Twas not thus their gospel redly
Saints and martyrs seal'd.

You had seem'd more like a martyr
Than you seem to us,
To the beasts that caught a Tartar
Once at Ephesus ;
Rather than the stout apostle
Of the Gentiles, who,
Pagan-like, could cuff and wrestle,
They 'd have chosen you.

Yet, I ween, on such occasion
Your dissenting voice
Would have been, in mild persuasion,
Raised against their choice ;
Man of peace, and man of merit,
Pompous, wise and grave,
Ephraim ! is it flesh or spirit
You strive most to save ?
Vain is half this care and caution
O'er the earthly shell,
We can neither baffle nor shun
Dark plumed Azrael.
Onward ! onward ! still we wander,
Nearer draws the goal ;
Half the riddle 's read, we ponder
Vainly on the whole.
Eastward ! in the pink horizon,
Fleecy hillocks shame
This dim range dull earth that lies on,
Tinged with rosy flame.

Westward ! as a stricken giant
 Stoops his bloody crest,
And tho' vanquish'd, frowns defiant,
 Sinks the sun to rest.
Distant yet, approaching quickly
 From the shades that lurk,
Like the black pall gathers thickly
 Night, when none may work.
Soon our restless occupation
 Shall have ceas'd to be ;
Units ! in God's vast creation,
 Ciphers ! what are we ?
Onward ! onward ! oh ! faint-hearted ;
 Nearer and more near
Has the goal drawn since we started,
 Be of better cheer.

Preacher ! all forbearance ask, for
 All are worthless found,
Man must aye take man to task for
 Faults while earth goes round.
On this dank soil thistles muster,
 Thorns are broadcast sown ;
Seek not figs where thistles cluster,
 Grapes where thorns have grown.

Sun and rain and dew from heaven,
 Light and shade and air,
Heat and moisture freely given,
 Thorns and thistles share.

Vegetation rank and rotten
Feels the cheering ray ;
Not uncared for, unforgotten,
We, too, have our day.

Unforgotten ! though we cumber
Earth, we work His will.
Shall we sleep through night's long slumber
Unforgotten still ?
Onward ! onward ! toiling ever,
Weary steps and slow,
Doubting oft, despairing never,
To the goal we go !

Hark ! the bells on distant cattle
Waft across the range,
Through the golden-tufted wattle,
Music low and strange ;
Like the marriage peal of fairies
Comes the tinkling sound,
Or like chimes of sweet St. Mary's
On far English ground.
How my courser champs the snaffle,
And, with nostril spread,
Snorts and scarcely seems to ruffle
Fern leaves with his tread ;
Cool and pleasant on his haunches
Blows the evening breeze,
Through the overhanging branches
Of the wattle trees :

Onward ! to the Southern Ocean
Glides the breath of Spring.
Onward, with a dreamy motion,
I, too, glide and sing—
Forward ! forward ! still we wander—
Tinted hills that lie
In the red horizon yonder—
Is the goal so nigh ?

Whisper, spring-wind, softly singing,
Whisper in my ear ;
Respite and nepenthe bringing,
Can the goal be near ?
Laden with the dew of vespers
From the fragrant sky,
In my ear the wind that whispers
Seems to make reply—

‘ Question not, but live and labour
Till yon goal be won,
Helping every feeble neighbour,
Seeking help from none ;
Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
KINDNESS in another’s trouble,
COURAGE in your own.’

Courage, comrades, this is certain,
All is for the best—

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

91

There are lights behind the curtain—

Gentles, let us rest.

As the smoke-rack veers to seaward

From the 'ancient clay,'

With its moral drifting leeward,

Ends the wanderer's lay.

THE ROLL OF THE KETTLEDRUM : OR, THE LAY OF THE LAST CHARGER

' You have the Pyrrhic dance, as yet,
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone ?
Of two such lessons, why forget
The nobler and the manlier one ? '

BYRON.

ONE line of swart profiles, and bearded lips dressing,
One ridge of bright helmets, one crest of fair plumes,
One streak of blue sword-blades all bared for the fleshing,
One row of red nostrils that scent battle-fumes.

Forward ! the trumpets were sounding the charge,
The roll of the kettledrum rapidly ran,
That music, like wild-fire spreading at large,
Madden'd the war-horse as well as the man.

Forward ! still forward ! we thunder'd along,
Steadily yet, for our strength we were nursing ;
Tall Ewart, our sergeant, was humming a song,
Lance-corporal Black Will was blaspheming and cursing.

Opens their volley of guns on our right,
Puffs of grey smoke, veiling gleams of red flame,
Curling to leeward, were seen on the height
Where the batteries were posted, as onward we came.

Spreading before us their cavalry lay,
Squadron on squadron, troop upon troop ;
We were so few, and so many were they—
Eagles wait calmly the sparrow-hawk's stoop.

Forward ! still forward ! steed answering steed
Cheerily neigh'd, while the foam-flakes were toss't
From bridle to bridle—the top of our speed
Was gain'd, but the pride of our order was lost.

One was there, leading by nearly a rood,
Though we were racing he kept to the fore,
Still as a rock in his stirrups he stood,
High in the sunlight his sabre he bore.

Suddenly tottering, backwards he crash't,
Loudly his helm right in front of us rung ;
Iron hoofs thunder'd, and naked steel flash't
Over him—youngest, where many were young.

Now we were close to them, every horse striding
Madly ;—St. Luce pass't with never a groan ;—
Sadly my master look't round—he was riding
On the boy's right, with a line of his own.

Thrusting his hand in his breast or breast-pocket,
While from his wrist the sword swung by a chain,
Swiftly he drew out some trinket or locket,
Kiss't it (I think) and replaced it again.

Burst, while his fingers reclosed on the haft,
Jarring concussion and earth-shaking din,
Horse 'counter'd horse, and I reeled, but he laugh't,
Down went his man, cloven clean to the chin !

Wedged in the midst of that struggling mass,
After the first shock, where each his foe singled,
Little was seen save a dazzle, like glass
In the sun, with grey smoke and black dust intermingled.

Here and there redden'd a pistol shot, flashing
Through the red sparkle of steel upon steel !
Redder the spark seem'd, and louder the clashing,
Struck from the helm by the iron-shod heel !

Over fallen riders, like wither'd leaves strewing
Uplands in autumn, we sunder'd their ranks ;
Steeds rearing and plunging, men hacking and hewing,
Fierce grinding of sword-blades, sharp goading of flanks.

Short was the crisis of conflict soon over,
Being too good (I suppose) to last long ;
Through them we cut, as the scythe cuts the clover,
Batter'd and stain'd we emerged from their throng.

Some of our saddles were emptied, of course ;
To heaven (or elsewhere) Black Will had been carried !
Ned Sullivan mounted Will's riderless horse,
His mare being hurt, while ten seconds we tarried.

And then we re-formed, and went at them once more,
 And ere they had rightly closed up the old track,
 We broke through the lane we had open'd before,
 And as we went forward e'en so we came back.

Our numbers were few, and our loss far from small,
 They could fight, and besides, they were twenty to one ;
 We were clear of them all when we heard the recall,
 And thus we returned, but my tale is not done.

For the hand of my rider felt strange on my bit,
 He breathed once or twice like one partially choked,
 And sway'd in his seat, then I knew he was hit ;—
 He must have bled fast, for my withers were soak'd,

And scarcely an inch of my housing was dry ;
 I slacken'd my speed, yet I never quite stop't,
 Ere he patted my neck, said, ' Old fellow, good-bye !'
 And drop't off me gently, and lay where he drop't !

Ah, me ! after all, they may call us dumb creatures,—
 I tried hard to neigh but the sobs took my breath,
 Yet I guess't, gazing down at those still, quiet features,
 He was never more happy in life than in death.

Two years back, at Aldershot, Elrington mentioned
 My name to our colonel one field-day. He said,
 ' Count,' ' Steeltrap,' and ' Challenger ' ought to be pen-
 sion'd ;—
 ' Count ' died the same week, and now ' Steeltrap ' is dead.

That morning our colonel was riding 'Theresa,'
 The filly by 'Teddington' out of 'Mistake,'
 His girls, pretty Alice and fair-hair'd Louisa,
 Were there on the ponies he purchased from Blake.

I remember he pointed me out to his daughters,
 Said he, 'In this troop I may fairly take pride,
 But I've none left like him in my officers' quarters,
 Whose life-blood the mane of old "Challenger" dyed.'

Where are they? the war-steeds who shared in our glory,
 The 'Lanercost' colt and the 'Acrobat' mare,
 And the Irish division, 'Kate Kearney' and 'Rory,'
 And rushing 'Roscommon' and eager 'Kildare,'

And 'Freeny,' a favourite once with my master,
 And 'Warlock,' a sluggard, but honest and true,
 And 'Tancred,' as honest as 'Warlock,' but faster,
 And 'Blacklock,' and 'Birdlime,' and 'Molly Carew'?—

All vanish't, what wonder! twelve summers have pass't
 Since then, and my comrade lies buried this day,—
 Old 'Steeltrap,' the kicker—and now I'm the last
 Of the chargers who shared in that glorious fray.

Come, 'Harlequin,' keep your nose out of my manger,
 You'll get your allowance, my boy, and no more;
 Snort! 'Silvertail,' snort! when you've seen as much
 danger

As I have, you won't mind the rats in the straw.

.

Our gallant old colonel came limping and halting,
The day before yesterday, into my stall ;
Oh ! light to the saddle I 've once seen him vaulting,
In full marching order, steel broadsword, and all.

And now, his left leg than his right is made shorter
Three inches, he stoops, and his chest is unsound ;
He spoke to me gently, and patted my quarter,
I laid my ears back and look't playfully round.

For that word kindly meant, that caress kindly given,
I thank't him, though dumb, but my cheerfulness fled ;
More sadness I drew from the face of the living
Than years back I did from the face of the dead.

For the dead face, upturn'd, tranquil, joyous, and fearless,
Look't straight from green sod to blue fathomless sky
With a smile ; but the living face, gloomy and tearless,
And haggard and harass'd, look't down with a sigh.

Did he think of the first time he kiss't Lady Mary ?
On the morning he wing'd Horace Greville the beau ?
On the winner he steer'd in the grand military ?
On the charge that he headed twelve long years ago ?

Did he think on each fresh year, of fresh grief the herald ?
On lids that are sunken, and locks that are grey ?
On Alice, who bolted with Brian Fitzgerald ?
On Rupert, his first-born, dishonour'd by ' play ' ?

On Louey, his darling, who sleeps 'neath the cypress
 That shades her and one whose last breath gave her life ?
 I saw those strong fingers hard over each eye press—
 Oh ! the dead rest in peace when the quick toil in strife !

Scoff, man ! egotistical, proud, unobservant,
 Since I with man's grief dare to sympathise thus ;
 Why scoff ?—fellow-creature I am, fellow-servant
 Of God, can man fathom God's dealings with us ?

The wide gulf that parts us may yet be no wider
 Than that which parts you from some being more blest ;
 And there may be more links 'twixt the horse and his rider
 Than ever your shallow philosophy guess't.

You are proud of your power, and vain of your courage,
 And your blood, Anglo-Saxon, or Norman, or Celt ;
 Though your gifts you extol, and our gifts you disparage,
 Your perils, your pleasures, your sorrows we 've felt.

We, too, sprung from mares of the prophet of Mecca,
 And nursed on the pride that was born with the milk,
 And filtered through ' Crucifix,' ' Beeswing,' ' Rebecca,'
 We love sheen of scarlet and shimmer of silk.

We, too, sprung from loins of the Ishmaelite stallions,
 We glory in daring that dies or prevails ;
 From counter of squadrons, the crash of battalions,
 To rending of blackthorns, and rattle of rails.

In all strife where courage is tested, and power,
 From the meet on the hill-side, the horn-blast, the find,
 The burst, the long gallop that seems to devour
 The campaign, all obstacles flinging behind,

To the cheer and the clarion, the war-music blended
 With war-cry, the furious dash at the foe,
 The terrible shock, the recoil, and the splendid
 Bare sword, flashing blue, rising red from the blow,

I 've borne *one* through perils where many have seen us,
 No tyrant, a kind friend, a patient instructor,
 And I 've felt some strange element flashing between us,
 Till the saddle seem'd turn'd to a lightning conductor.

Did he see ? could he feel through the faintness, the numb-
 ness,

While linger'd the spirit half-loosed from the clay,
 Dumb eyes seeking his in their piteous dumbness,
 Dumb quivering nostrils, too stricken to neigh ?

And what then ? the colours reversed, the drums muffled,
 The black nodding plumes, the dead march, and the pall,
 The stern faces, soldier-like, silent, unruffled,
 The slow sacred music that floats over all !

Cross carbine and boarspear, hang bugle and banner,
 Spur, sabre, and snaffle, and helm—is it well ?
 Vain 'scutcheon, false trophies of Mars and Diana,—
 Can the dead laurel sprout with the live *immortelle* ?

It may be,—we follow, and though we inherit
 Our strength for a season, our pride for a span,
 Say ! vanity are they ? vexation of spirit ?
 Not so, since they serve for a time horse and man.

They serve for a time, and they make life worth living,
 In spite of life's troubles—'tis vain to despond ;
 Oh, man ! *we* at least, *we* enjoy, with thanksgiving,
 God's gifts on this earth, though we look not beyond.

You sin, and *you* suffer, and we, too, find sorrow,
 Perchance through *your* sin—yet it soon will be o'er ;
 We labour to-day, and we slumber to-morrow,
 Strong horse and bold rider !—and *who knoweth more ?*

In our barrack-square shouted Drill-sergeant M'Cluskie,
 The roll of the kettledrum rapidly ran,
 The colonel wheel'd short, speaking once, dry and husky,
 ' Would to God I had died with your master, old man.'

A DEDICATION

TO THE AUTHOR OF ' HOLMSBY HOUSE '

THEY are rhymes rudely strung with intent less
Of sound than of words,
In lands where bright blossoms are scentless,
And songless bright birds ;
Where, with fire and fierce drought on her tresses,
Insatiable Summer oppresses
Sere woodlands and sad wildernesses,
And faint flocks and herds.

Where in dreariest days, when all dews end,
And all winds are warm,
Wild Winter's large floodgates are loosen'd,
And floods, freed by storm
From broken-up fountain heads, dash on
Dry deserts with long-pent-up passion—
Here rhyme was first framed without fashion,
Song shaped without form.

Whence gather'd ?—The locust's glad chirrup
May furnish a stave ;
The ring of a rowel and stirrup,
The wash of a wave.

A DEDICATION

The chaunt of the marsh frog in rushes,
That chimes through the pauses and hushes
Of nightfall, the torrent that gushes,
The tempests that rave.

In the deep'ning of dawn, when it dapples
The dusk of the sky,
With streaks like the redd'ning of apples,
The ripening of rye.
To eastward, when cluster by cluster,
Dim stars and dull planets, that muster,
Wax wan in a world of white lustre
That spreads far and high.

In the gathering of night gloom o'erhead, in
The still silent change,
All fire-flushed, when forest trees redden
On slopes of the range.
When the gnarl'd, knotted trunks Eucalyptian
Seem carved, like weird columns Egyptian,
With curious device—quaint inscription,
And hieroglyph strange.

In the Spring, when the wattle gold trembles
'Twixt shadow and shine,
When each dew-laden air draught resembles
A long draught of wine ;
When the skyline's blue burnish'd resistance
Makes deeper the dreamiest distance,

Some song in all hearts have existence,—
Such songs have been mine.

They came in all guises, some vivid
To clasp and to keep ;
Some sudden and swift as the livid
Blue thunder-flame's leap.
This swept through the first breath of clover
With memories renew'd to the rover—
That flash'd while the black horse turn'd over
Before the long sleep.

To you (having cunning to colour
A page with your pen,
That through dull days, and nights even duller,
Long years ago ten ;
Fair pictures in fever afforded)—
I send these rude staves, roughly worded
By one in whose brain stands recorded
As clear now as then,

' The great rush of grey " Northern Water,"
The green ridge of bank,
The " sorrel " with curved sweep of quarter
Curl'd close to clean flank,
The Royalist saddlefast squarely,
And, where the bright uplands stretch fairly,
Behind, beyond pistol-shot barely,
The Roundheaded rank.

' A long launch, with clinging of muscles,
And clenching of teeth !
The loose doublet ripples and rustles !
The swirl shoots beneath !'
Enough. In return for your garland—
In lieu of the flowers from your far land—
Take wild growth of dreamland or starland,
Take weeds for your wreath.

Yet rhyme had not fail'd me for reason,
Nor reason for rhyme ;
Sweet Song ! had I sought you in season,
And found you in time.
You beckon in your bright beauty yonder,
And I, waxing fainter yet fonder,
Now weary too soon when I wander—
Now fall when I climb.

It matters but little in the long run,
The weak have some right—
Some share in the race that the strong run,
The fight the strong fight.
If words that are worthless go westward,
Yet the worst word shall be as the best word,
In the day when all riot sweeps restward,
In darkness or light.

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